

JAMAICAN JOURNEY

By W. J. Brown

THREE MONTHS IN RUSSIA

VERY FREE SPEECH

WHAT HAVE I TO LOSE?

I MEET AMERICA

THE CIVIL SERVICE: RETROSPECT

AND PROSPECT

SO FAR . . .

EVERYBODY'S GUIDE TO PARLIAMENT

SUCCESS YOUR BIRTHRIGHT



JAMAICAN JOURNEY

by W. J. BROWN

M. P.



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CHAPTER I



Embarkation on the "Eros"

YESTERDAY, December 8, 1946, was a day of pouring rain in London. I reached Euston at 5.15 p.m. to catch the 5.55 train to Stranraer. This train ran in two parts, one at 5.55 p.m. the other at 6.5 p.m. The first part had a sleeping compartment reserved for me, but no dining-car. If I went on the first part I could sleep but not dine. If I went on the second I could dine but not sleep. Mentally I inverted the French phrase "Qui dort, dine," into "Qui dine, dort"—and decided for the second part of the train.

In the early hours of the morning I reached Stranraer, and got on to a cross-channel packet for Larne, and thence by train to Belfast. In the documents supplied to me by the shipping company it was stated that currency and customs and passport examination would take place on the ship. But someone had decided that it should take place on the quay before the passengers were allowed aboard. But no provision—such as benches upon which to lay out and open the baggage—had been made for this. So each passenger's bags were dumped on the dirty floor of the shed at the quayside and then a Customs official rummaged our bags.

My bottle of "Kruschen Salts" was examined and shaken to make sure that it contained no diamonds or other articles of value which, if exported from Britain, would weaken Britain's capital position. A pound packet of Tate and Lyles's lump sugar was highly suspicious. Was I not going to Jamaica—which produces sugar? Why then carry sugar? That packet was torn open and examined with great care. My Shakespeare was opened and shaken to make sure that no large banknotes were being transported within its pages. My slippers were looked at on the supposition that pearls might be concealed in their toes. That bag was very thoroughly rummaged, while I said no word. Then

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the Customs man began on the second bag. Amongst its contents was a brown-paper parcel containing some books and some medicines for Lord Beaverbrook, with whom I was going to spend Christmas. Fortunately there was attached to the parcel a letter, addressed to me, from Lord Beaverbrook's secretary, stating the contents. The Customs man read it, saw my designation—"W. J. Brown, M.P."—and said—"Why didn't you tell me who you were? I wouldn't have given you the works like this." And I felt the blazing anger I always feel at the inconveniences and indignities imposed on other people, but which I am spared merely because I happen to be a Member of Parliament. All over the world people are being shoved from pillar to post, shot about from one Departmental bureaucrat to another, examined and inspected, checked and cross-checked. And all over the world their rulers are exempted from the restrictions they impose on their fellow-men.

The Customs examination over, there followed "Currency Control." But the word had got around. I was an M.P. So there was no more than a question—"How much money have you, Mr. Brown?" And a reply "About nine pounds." And "Currency Control" was satisfied. I could have taken hundreds of thousands of pounds in banknotes, for all the real "Control" there was of "currency" so far as I was concerned.

Aboard, I found my cabin, a single one on the top deck, close to the lounge. The ship was the s.s. *Eros*, of about 6,000 tons. She will reach Jamaica on Christmas Eve. She will begin her journey by going to the Clyde to take on oil supplies. I left the Clyde early this morning. To-night I shall be back there. A sensible administration would have allowed the passengers from London to have travelled to Glasgow yesterday, to have had a night's rest in bed, and have allowed them to take a tender out to the ship when she came in for oil. But Government, in this case the Ministry of Transport, decreed otherwise. And so we have begun with the misery of an all-night journey—without sleeper—an unnecessary channel crossing to Ireland, and the indignities of Belfast. Still, perhaps it was as well that I saw Belfast.

For the next two weeks this ship will be my home. Its little circle of some twenty-one passengers will constitute my total acquaintance. Its little library, plus my own Shakespeare, will provide me with all the mental nutriment I shall get. And I am content that it should be so.

Embarkation on the "Eros"

It is salutary that from time to time the horizons of our world should be contracted into a narrow space. It is good that there should be imposed upon me the discipline of a regular routine. In London I live simultaneously, in several worlds—the world of politics, the world of Trade Unionism, and the world of journalism. And from time to time I make incursions into the world of broadcasting. All these worlds involve dealing all the time with people. And people are the most exhausting things on earth! Every contact with another person involves an adjustment within oneself. One is literally a different man with this person from what one is with that. I can work long hours at a desk or at a typewriter without fatigue. But continual contact with people deflates and exhausts me.

Moreover, these last few years have been years of incessant activity. In Parliament I have been responsible for two big Civil Service campaigns which, starting from zero, I have brought to fruition in two Pensions (Increase) Acts and the Civil Service Superannuation Act of 1946. And I have taken one man's share in the general work of the House, on matters other than the Civil Service issues which, as the Parliamentary Secretary of the Civil Service Clerical Association, have been my special care. In journalism, the regular weekly article I write for the *Evening Standard*, and other contributions to the weekly journals and magazines, have sat me down at the typewriter most mornings at an hour when most men are comfortably turning over for another two or three hours' sleep.

And I have suffered, too, from a long-standing inability to "abide an hour, and see injustice done." If I see something which is plainly wrong, like the attempted imposition by the Trade Unions of the "Closed Shop," I must make it my business to start a crusade about the matter. But this, as all readers of *Tom Brown's Schooldays* will recall, is in the nature of the Browns. They cannot help "butting in." "*No dog is too lame for them to help over the stile. No fight is too hopeless for them to intrude their carcasses upon. They grow old, and bald, and short of breath, but the last rallying cry is as imperious as the first to which they responded. And they will not be quiet till old Father Time comes along with his scythe and reaps them away for the troublesome old boys that they are!*"

And so I'm weary—weary of Parliament, weary of the daily postbag and the never-ending troubles of one's constituents, weary of Trade Union disputes, and of the never-ending insolence of

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elected persons. For a fortnight I shall be free of all that, and free in another way, too.

"Freedom," said Engels, "*is the recognition of necessity.*" On board ship one experiences that freedom. One does not arrange one's own life. It is arranged for one. All one has to do is to recognize the necessity of compliance, and then one knows "freedom."

And, though after six war years in England I have come to doubt the existence of the sun, it may be that I shall see the sun again, and feel the chill in my bones melting away in his warm embrace.

I shall write, of course, and what is now an opening chapter may finish up as a book. If it does, two things will be true of it, about both of which I had better be clear now. It will conform to no rules. And it will be written for my pleasure and not for the reader's entertainment. No rules: for the Golden Rule is that there are no Golden Rules. If I switch from the personal to the political, from the ephemeral to the eternal, from tragedy to farce, why not? Life is like that, anyway. And if I write for my own pleasure, that is how all work should be done. All that the reader is entitled to is the overspill! And he isn't obliged to take that if he doesn't want to!

CHAPTER 2



Remarks on Lord Beaverbrook

WE have left Belfast and are now lying in the Clyde, where, we are told, we shall stay until 2 o'clock to-morrow afternoon. To think that two whole days should thus be thrown away!

It is a curious friendship—this friendship for Lord Beaverbrook—which takes me to Jamaica. It has survived twenty years of contact and of political difference, and on my part—and I hope on his—it remains a very warm one. I first met him at a meeting in the Mile End Road. He was to address a Jewish Youth Club and I had been invited by a Jewish friend to go and hear him. He emerged on the platform with a broad grin on his face. "What would you like me to talk about?" he asked. "I can talk about three things—finance, newspapers, and politics. Which will you have?" The audience shouted "Newspapers," and so for forty minutes or so Beaverbrook talked on this theme. He was vivid, humorous and serious by turns, and always entertaining. At the end of his speech, there was a discussion in which I spoke. I attacked his newspapers, and I attacked as hard as I could. After the meeting word was brought to me that Lord Beaverbrook would like to have a word with me in the speaker's room at the back of the hall. I went round and was duly introduced. He said—"My boy, that was a very fine speech you made. If you can talk like that you'll go a long way!" And then he began—as I have so often in subsequent years heard him do with others—a rapid drumfire of questions about me, my work and my life, which, slightly bewildered, I did my best to answer. The little talk ended with a broad and comprehensive—but slightly indefinite—invitation: "Come and see me whenever you like!"

That invitation was too general for me to act on, and I did not see him again for some months. Then one day the telephone rang in my office. I picked up the receiver and a voice told me that Lord Beaverbrook was being put through. Beaverbrook

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asked me if I would go round to Stornoway House straightaway. I did so, wondering what he could want with me. I found him in his lounge. He said—"Mr. Brown, I see that you are running a campaign to improve the wages of Civil Servants. I'd like to help you."

That was the first of many shocks he has administered to me. I had always thought of him as a Conservative in politics and a reactionary in social affairs. But here he was, apparently as much interested in remedying low wage standards as I was. Nor was this a pose on his part, as events proved. He put behind my campaign the support of his newspapers. But he did more. He spoke at great meetings of Civil Servants with me in London, Portsmouth, Nottingham, and other towns. This campaign gave me a new view of Beaverbrook.

It is a current fashion to attack his newspapers for their "irresponsibility" and "inconsistency." But in fact they exhibit on many matters a remarkable consistency over the years, whether you agree with their policy or not. And one of these matters is support for a high-wages policy. Twenty years after this campaign of which I am speaking, I was with him at his farm in Somersetshire when he was talking farm concerns with his bailiff. The question of wages for the farm hands arose. "Are we paying them all we can?" he asked. The bailiff replied—"We are paying them the Trade Union rate and more." "Can't we do better than that?" asked Beaverbrook. The bailiff answered—"We are already very unpopular with the other farmers around here because of the high rates we are paying. And I don't want us to become still more unpopular." Beaverbrook became suddenly stern and his voice hardened, "You will never allow unpopularity with the farmers to stop you paying the highest wages you can," he ordered. "Agriculture in this country has rested for decades on outrageously low wage standards. And remember the farm-workers are my people. I come of generations of farm workers."

In the score or so of years which intervened between these two conversations I saw much of Beaverbrook. I saw him actively campaigning for the things he believes in. I saw him at play. I saw him in hours of personal and political defeat, and in moments of high triumph. The truth about him is that you can't stand him, or you become a devotee. I became a devotee.

Many elements entered into that, apart from admiration for

Remarks on Lord Beaverbrook

the astonishing qualities of Beaverbrook. One was a certain similarity at an earlier point in time between his position in politics and mine. He was a "Conservative," but he sat very loose to the Tory machine. He endeavoured to impose on the Conservative Party the policies in which he believed—especially as regards Empire Free Trade, Agriculture, and so on. The Tory Party took two or three lines with Beaverbrook. One was to soothe and flatter him, but he is not easy to soothe, and he has a devastating eye for insincere flattery. The second was to defy him. The third was to pay lip-service to his policies at election times, and then to repudiate them afterwards. Half of the time he was "at odds" with his Party. Being himself a man of great courage and resolution he found their timidity and time-serving very difficult to endure. At one stage they expelled him from the Carlton Club. At others he ran unofficial candidates against official Conservative nominees.

My position *vis-à-vis* the Labour Party at the time I met Beaverbrook was not dissimilar, at least in principle. All my adult life had been spent in Trade Union and political work. I had been sharply critical of the Labour administration of 1923-24, from outside the House of Commons. In 1929 I entered Parliament as the Labour Member for West Wolverhampton. It was not long before I sensed something wrong about the line of MacDonald's Government. It seemed to me that there were two alternatives open to the Government in that Parliament. One was to go straight ahead in implementing the policy upon which Labour had fought the election. If we did that, the Government's life would probably be brief, but it would not be inglorious. And at the subsequent election the Party might receive the reward of fidelity. The other line, it seemed to me, was to make a deal with the Liberals, who held the balance of power in that Parliament, on the basis of the greatest common measure of agreement in policy between the two Parties. In this event, I thought, the life of the Government might be a long one, and that if it were not glorious it might be very useful, none the less. In fact, the Labour Government pursued neither line. It neither pleased its friends nor conciliated its enemies. Its life was both brief and inglorious. It havered and dithered for a couple of years. And when the next election came it met overwhelming defeat at the polls.

I saw this tragedy developing, proclaimed what I saw as

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loudly as I possibly could, did my unavailing best, with others, to alter policy from within the Party, and then, when this proved fruitless, resigned from the Parliamentary Labour Party in March of 1931.

From then onwards I stood as an Independent. It was the boast of the Labour machine in those days that it "broke" every man who broke with it. Usually, the withdrawal of the support of the "machine" was enough to secure the defeat of a heretic. If, however, this seemed likely to be insufficient, then an "official candidate" would be put up—whether he had any chance of being elected or not—to "split the vote" and to secure the defeat of the dissenter. That is what they did with me: and from 1931 to 1942 Westminster knew me no more.

Beaverbrook was politically lonely. And so was I. This essential loneliness provided, across the political divide, a bond between us. Each of us looked at his "side" in politics with somewhat baleful eyes! And we felt a little less lonely in each other's company.

Anyway, we have "kept company," on and off, ever since. And soon I shall be in his stimulating, vitalizing presence again.

CHAPTER 3



Principles and Prejudices — “The Bigger the Better”

AMONG our company, on board ship, are Captain Gammans, M.P., and his wife. They are going to Jamaica, not to see Beaverbrook, whose presence in the island they only heard of the other day, but for a holiday. Gammans is a Conservative. But I get on well with him, as indeed I do with many Tories. I ask myself why. I think the answer is that Labour men have principles, while Tories only have prejudices. And prejudices are much sounder than principles—and vastly less dangerous. This will be the theme of this chapter.

A prejudice is something instinctive, something unconscious. A principle is something rational, a concept worked out in the mind. Prejudices come from life and experience. Principles come, for the most part, out of books. Whenever you have to choose between a prejudice and a principle, choose the prejudice! The conscious mind, which produces principles, is only a part, and that the lesser part, of the mind of man. The whole mind includes the subconscious, in which lie the distilled experiences of the race as well as of the individual himself. Thus the whole mind—with its apparently irrational promptings and urges—is often a better guide than the conscious mind in which our “principles” take shape. “*Theory is grey, my friend. Green is the immortal hue of life*”—said the wise and gentle Goethe.

One of mankind’s worst diseases at the present time lies in an excessive adherence to principle. Indeed it is adherence to principle which makes men the most destructive and cruel type of life on the planet. Animals have no principles. So they only attack man when they are either frightened or hungry. At other times they leave him alone, and even shun his unwanted presence. But man is at his most dangerous not when he is hungry or frightened, but when he is suffering from an attack of principle.

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In the name of "principle" men will make it impossible for a fellow-man, whom apart from "principle" they like very well, to live—witness the case of Mr. Clark, Plymouth Brother, of Lots Road Power Station, Chelsea, against whom his workmates recently raised, "on principle," the issue of the "Closed Shop." In the name of principle, men will persecute, exile, torture, and slay without limit or restraint. Nazis will exterminate Jews and Communists, Communists will "liquidate" Nazis, to further orders. And nations will almost exterminate themselves in the effort to exterminate some other nation which has trodden down some sacred "principle" or other.

Take Harry Pollitt, for example. I like Harry. He is a fine type of chap, jovial, warm-hearted, human. In his personal dealings with his fellow-man, Harry could be relied upon to act, spontaneously and instinctively, in the relationship of a friend and brother. But equip Harry with a set of "principles" in the shape of the Marxian dialectic, and Harry will justify every iniquity committed by the Russians—the "liquidation" of the Kulaks, the operations of the OGPU, the "purges," the treaty with Hitler, the stabbing in the back of Poland, the overrunning of the Baltic States, the deportation of thousands of people, whose only crime is to be educated, into the nameless "labour camps" of Siberia—and all the rest of the operations of that police-ridden tyranny which is Russia to-day!

In the name of "principle," Churches founded to inculcate the love of God will excommunicate, put to the rack, and burn outright other children of that same God, who see Truth through different spectacles from theirs.

The trouble with most of our present-day politics is that they are infested with principles! Hardly anybody says—"What is the problem? How shall we tackle it?" Nearly everybody wants to apply to the problem some "principle" or other, which, on examination, will usually be found to beg the question completely. Thus if the "principle" of private enterprise produces widespread poverty and unemployment, we clamour for the opposite "principle" of nationalization as the sovereign cure for these evils. There is no reason to suppose that universal nationalization will in fact cure these evils. It is practically certain, however, that it will produce other evils worse than unemployment and poverty amongst a proportion of the population—such as the eating up of the nation's resources by a vast bureaucracy, a vast

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fall in output, the concentration of all power in the hands of an Omnipotent State, the institution of police-control of everything and everybody, and the complete suppression of every form of liberty—including the liberty to grumble at its suppression!

We should beware of "principles." Every "principle" is a generalization. Every generalization is a simplification. Every simplification is a distortion. Every distortion is a departure from truth. Thus every principle is a lie!

Moreover, principles prevent one from reacting to events on the basis of one's own perceptions of truth. The ordinary decent man's instincts are a pretty good guide. If men be free to react by the light of them the reaction will probably be a sound one. But if men are inhibited from reacting out of the depths of their own being, because it has been overlaid by a body of "principles," the sanest elements in mankind will be submerged.

Thus compassion and humour constitute the saving graces of mankind. Compassion deals in the concrete human values. We see a fellow-man in trouble, and our heart goes out to him. But principles inhibit compassion. Our fellow-human beings cease to be men and women. They become either the background to, or the raw material of, a "principle." Humour, the heart of which is a recognition of the natural incongruity of things, and a capacity in ourselves to recognize that it is possible that we are mistaken, is also slain by "principle." The most dangerous races in modern times have been nations devoted to principles but devoid of humour and compassion. German idealism, which is a very real thing, when unrelieved by either humour or compassion, can take forms indistinguishable from complete insanity. And so can the Shintoism of Japan, as we have seen to our cost.

Another corrective to excessive principle is the doctrine of natural limits. It consists in a recognition that there is a norm to all things and institutions. Beyond this norm the good becomes an evil.

Take, for example, the principle of "the Bigger the Better." Up to a given point that principle is true. Beyond that point it becomes evil and even ridiculous. Let us apply this to a few institutions and things to try it out.

Thus, up to a point, the bigger a Trade Union is the better. A Union with a hundred thousand members can do, by what Churchill once described as the "miracle of averages," all sorts of

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things for its membership which a Union of five thousand cannot do—especially in the field of supplying “Benefits” of one kind or another. But beyond the norm, other factors begin to operate. The bigger the Union becomes the less democratic it gets, and the more completely it falls into the hands of its permanent officers. The bigger it gets, the more “institutionalized” it becomes, and the less responsive to the needs and wishes of the membership. That is one cause of difficulty in the Trade Union movement of to-day. Vast Unions such as the Transport and General Workers’ Union, with a million or more members, have superseded many of the smaller and more specialized Unions of the past. Particular sections of such Unions find themselves swallowed up in a vast amorphous membership which includes everybody from midwives to gravediggers. The machinery becomes too ponderous and slow for efficient working. And so we get the series of “Unofficial Strikes” which have marked the Trade Union scene for years past.

Take, again, the struggle between the small shop and the big store. Up to a point the bigger the shop the better. The big store can order supplies to greater advantage than the small shop. It covers a wider variety of supplies, and can balance the “swings” against the “roundabouts” in a way impossible to the “single-line” small shop. But beyond that point the balance of advantage ceases to lie with the big store. To Mr. Smith the tobacconist round the corner I am “Mr. Brown,” a real live person—perhaps, I dimly hope, a friend. To the counter-assistant on the fifth floor of the west wing of a vast emporium, I am just a nuisance! And the cost of administration, the substitution of indirect for direct control in these vast businesses, begins to offset the price advantages which the big store enjoys as against the small shop. Soon the small shop can economically reassert itself against its giant competitor and destroyer, as it is doing in America, the home of the big store.

It isn’t true of countries that the bigger they are the better. A country which is so small that it lacks within its borders some elements essential to its economy is obviously at a disadvantage compared with one which doesn’t. There is a norm for a nation, too. But beyond this norm a mere assertion of size may be a positive disadvantage. The world owes more to little Greece than to the vast United States of America, Switzerland is a happier place than its big neighbour Germany. And our own “right little

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tight little Island" has contributed much more to the sum of human well-being than the Russian Colossus has done.

And finally, I call attention to the fact that most giants are morons. And that no man conducts his courtship on the basis of the "bigger the woman the better."

Let us avoid principles if we can! If we can't, let us control them by our normal human reactions of compassion and humour. And let us from time to time check them by reference to a few simple facts. For the first principle of all is that we should retain our sanity.

CHAPTER 4



On Being Pushed Around — Modern Trends — The Closed Shop — The T.U.C.

IT is now Tuesday midday. It was on Sunday evening that I left London. Our ship is stationary off Gourrock, at the mouth of the Clyde. We are surrounded by a blanket of fog. The tankers which were to bring us our supply of fuel for the journey cannot come out to us. And we cannot go in to them. There is no apparent reason why we should not be here for days yet. The captain at breakfast this morning was gloomily helpless, and inclined to be pessimistic about reaching Jamaica by Christmas. But one feels peculiarly passive about things. One has no responsibility for anything. There is nothing one can do about anything. One has but to wait and endure. Things will be as they will be. One's sole duty is that of acquiescence.

On shipboard, that is. But I am not sure that the truth has not a much wider application to life generally. "Man has sought out many inventions." And a nice mess he has made of the world! Perhaps it would have been better if he had concentrated on the injunction "Be still, and know that I am God." And on that parallel truth—"in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength." Instead, he has concentrated on pushing things and people around, with the results we see all about us.

Nor does he seem to learn by experience. What he does is to enlarge the area of things which he pushes around, and the number of people he pushes around. In the Middle Ages we were shoved around only on one thing—religion. On that conformity was required. On other matters men might think what they liked. But to-day we are pushed around by all sorts of agencies, and the area of mental life in which conformity is exacted becomes wider and wider until, in the Communist State, it embraces all phases of thought. In a quasi-democracy, like Britain, we are pushed around by the State, by our Profes-

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sional Organizations or Trade Unions, and by our political Party. The area covered by these agencies is now tremendously wide. But still some hinterland is left in which we may think and do what we will. It narrows daily. And in the Communist State it fades out. All literature, all art, all journalism, all science, must serve the interests of the State. The artists, the writers, the journalists, the scientists who forget this will find themselves demoted, disciplined, "purged" and, if obdurate, "liquidated" without mercy.

Trade Unionism, when I began my work in it some thirty-five years ago, was a voluntary combination of poor men established to secure those rights and conditions which individually workmen were powerless to enforce. To-day Trade Unionism is becoming an involuntary tyranny, imposed upon men, sometimes in defiance of their religious convictions, by a Trade Union Bureaucracy which is primarily political in character.

The Trade Unions are tied politically to the Labour Party. Between the Trade Union Congress and the Labour Party there is an organic and mechanical alliance. A man may "contract out" of paying the "political levy" to his Trade Union, though a good deal of pressure will be applied to see that he doesn't. But the help which the Trade Unions give to the Labour Party is not confined to direct grants from the political funds of the Union. From the indirect contributions, the Trade Unionist, if his Union is affiliated to the Trade Union Congress, may not escape.

And the claims of the T.U.C. to say whether a man should be a member of a Union, and what particular Union he should join, are very wide. At its Brighton Conference in 1946, the T.U.C. repudiated the "Closed Shop" in "its American form"—whatever that may be. But they bluntly said that they could not admit "that a workman should be free to decide whether he should join a Union or not." They approved the principle of the "Closed Shop" to force men into Unions. They approved it as a means of making men leave "splinter" or "breakaway" Unions. They approved of it as directed against Unions "not affiliated to the T.U.C." They didn't approve of it as applied by one big Union against another—for "dog don't eat dog," not if they are of a size, anyway. For the rest, however, they approved of the "Closed Shop" while nominally repudiating it. They favoured "100 per cent Trade Unionism."

Now there are some 20 millions of "gainfully employed

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persons in Britain." Of these some $6\frac{3}{4}$ millions are in Unions affiliated to the T.U.C. Thus the logic of the T.U.C.'s pronouncement at Brighton is that the leaders of the $6\frac{3}{4}$ millions claim "as of right" to dictate to the remaining $13\frac{1}{4}$ millions of wage earners what they should do. That and no less is what is involved in the demand for "100 per cent Trade Unionism," or, as I should describe it, "Total Trade Unionism."

That is the extent to which the "shoving around" process is to be carried in one field of modern life—that is, if the T.U.C. can so arrange it.

The same phenomenon is to be observed in the political life of our time. Burke might declare that the British Constitution contained no place for "mandated delegates." But more and more the Member of Parliament becomes the "mandated delegate" of a Party. His first responsibility is not to his own conscience, not to his constituents. It is to his Party, that vast organization, that "machine" to whose support he owes his election. Because it is extremely difficult for a man to secure election to the House of Commons as an Independent, standing on his own feet, because the support of a Party machine is practically essential, the Party acquires a power over the individual Member which is wholly unhealthy. I say nothing against a Party when it is a free combination of men and women who share a common political outlook and a common approach to the political problems of the day. But when it becomes a caucus-ridden organization, compelling Members to obey its orders by the use of the twin weapons of bribery for the subservient and punishment for the courageous, the Party system becomes a very great evil.

In the case of the Communist Party, the evil is even worse than in the Labour Party. Labour Party men who are caught "out of step" are compelled to eat humble pie. In the case of Communists they have to positively grovel, as poor Pollitt did when the Russians, instead of lining up against the Nazis, signed the agreement with Hitler which let loose the Second World War. At least the Labour Party determines its own policy. It doesn't have to adapt itself, as the Communist Party does, to each devious twist and turn of policy decided upon by the Fourteen Dictators of the Kremlin! Nor does the control of the Communist Party stop at political matters. It claims to regulate the private life and the social contacts of its members, as well as their politics.

On Being Pushed Around

Almost every piece of new legislation makes the path of the non-conformist more difficult in the field it covers. The Education Act, for example, has merit in it. But it makes the position of the private experimental school much more difficult, just as the Health Services Act makes the position of the Naturopath and other unorthodox practitioners more difficult, and the position of the dental repair shops impossible.

In field after field life is becoming more stereotyped. In field after field we are being conditioned to a pattern determined to be good for us by anonymous Boards and Committees functioning unseen in the dim recesses of Whitehall. Most of the work of modern politics consists in "shoving someone else around."

For my part, I plead for the heretic in all fields. It would be too much to claim that all real progress comes through the heretic—the man who sees or thinks he sees some aspect of truth not seen, or insufficiently admitted, before, and who stakes his life on proclaiming what he sees. But it is sufficiently true to make it extremely undesirable to suppress the heretic and make it impossible for him to live and survive. The heterodoxy of one day becomes the orthodoxy of the morrow. We must allow no orthodoxy so to establish itself that no heterodoxy may in future arise to penetrate that orthodoxy and ventilate it with the winds of new truth as it is found.

CHAPTER 5



The Colour Bar — India — And the U.S.A.

THE fog continues. The ship's wireless set has been got into working order. So we can listen to the B.B.C. promising us still more and thicker fogs! The tanker from which we were to take in supplies has not yet left Glasgow—many miles away. This afternoon we are moving up the Clyde to meet her. Very cautiously we go, with many blasts on the foghorn to warn other vessels of our movements.

There is a West Indian barrister aboard. He is returning from London where he has eaten his dinners and been "called" to the Bar. He is in the Trinidad Civil Service. He complains that in the West Indian Civil Services, Englishmen are posted from Britain to the more important posts, even when there are fully qualified West Indians available on the spot. I tell him of the long struggle we had in the British Civil Service to break down the University monopoly of jobs in the Administrative Class, and to secure that a proportion of such posts should be filled by promotion of qualified men from the lower grades.

He poses the old problem of the Colour Bar. Is the American way or the British way the better? He says that the American attitude to the black man is—"You go over there. We stay here. Do what you like. Make what progress you can. Get on in the world. Only keep your world and ours apart." The English attitude, he says, is that black and white should live in the same world. But in it the black man's part must be limited. The black man may rise somewhat, but the whites must be at the top. Which is the better? Some West Indians think that the American way may be. I gently remind him that in the English way there is at least no room for the Ku Klux Klan nor for the Knights of Columbia. He admits that this is a point.

He praises the decision of the British to get out of India. I

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say that as we promised, we do. But what if the upshot be civil war between the Hindoos and Mohammedans? Under British rule the population of India has increased by five millions or so every ten years. Any serious breach of the peace in India would mean the starvation of millions of Indians. If that happens, shall we be praised for keeping our word? Or cursed for having precipitated the worst calamity in India for three centuries? I have the uneasy feeling that by the time this book is published, that question may have been answered. The Indian mind is a fascinating study. It created in the Vedantas perhaps the loftiest system of human thought that the human mind has ever attained. But it knows nothing and cares less for democracy as we understand it. The Hindoo, in the saddle, will seek to rule India as for centuries the native kings or princes did before the British came. The Mohammedans, whom the Hindoo regards as invaders and destroyers of Indian culture, will feel the weight of the deep underlying hatred of the Hindoo. And the casteless Indians, the most helpless people in the world, will miss the restraining influence of the British. The outcasts won't be able to do anything about it. But the Muslims will. The Hindoos have the money and the arms. But it is the Muslims who have the fighting spirit. And they will not sit down under oppression.

It may be that Nehru and his associates will act with moderation and generosity. I see no reason, however, for thinking so. And if not . . .

When I was in the United States in 1941, at question time, at every meeting I addressed, someone was sure to get up and pointing at me with an accusing finger, demand—"What about India?" It was my habit to reply—"Sir, India is indeed a grave problem. But the main difference between Britain and America is that the British exploit their coloured populations at the circumference while America exploits hers at the centre!" Had I been a bit brighter I might have replied "Indians? Which Indians? Ours or yours? Ours are still living!" Well, we are leaving India. But the Americans have still to respond to the Lord's injunction to "'ole Pharaoh"—"Let my people go" That, however, won't prevent them from tendering us admonitive advice as to what we ought to do in Palestine, Egypt, or anywhere else. Any more than the fact that they are engaged in establishing naval and aerial bases from the Arctic to the Pacific will prevent them from attacking "British Imperialism!" What a world it is! All of us

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see the moles in the other fellow's eyes; but are oblivious to the beams in our own—especially the Americans.

They present an extremely involved and fascinating problem, and one of world-wide importance. My impressions of the United States, when I visited it in 1941 was that of all the countries I had visited, America was potentially the most explosive. All the divisions one had seen in Britain were there magnified and intensified. There were divisions of race: divisions between States and the Federal Government: divisions of Colour: the division between Capital and Labour—and all these divisions were sharper and more ferocious than the corresponding divisions in England. There was, too, a sense of rootlessness about the American people, who struck me as being more neurotic than the British, although the British were then undergoing all the strains and stresses and hardships of war. In some ways, too, they struck me as a curiously adolescent people. They had the swift enthusiasms, and the quick depressions, of youth, all its lack of inner security, all its desire to "make an impression." Even their hospitality had a touch of exhibitionism in it. And here is this adolescent people, extremely unsure of itself, adding the power of the atomic bomb to the productive power of the most up-to-date industrial machine in the world to-day! The maximum of power added to the minimum of stability and responsibility! It is a terrifying combination. To add to its terrors is a Constitution which puts a premium on political deadlock, and a penalty on political flexibility. One day the world may regret that the Americans won the War of Independence—including America!

CHAPTER 6



Ghosts — Inefficiency — Some Anecdotes

AFTER our change of position yesterday, we lay for the rest of the day and through the night in the Clyde. A dense fog surrounded us, shutting out the land on either side. No shipping was visible, but from time to time the warning fog bell on our ship responded to the muffled clanging of the bells of other ships. The fog was eerie in its effects. Somewhere the busy world was going about its business. Here on our ship we were cut off from that world. We sat immobilized, in a state of suspended animation. Were we alive at all? Was this perhaps a ghost ship, and were we—having died without knowing it, as they say all men die—also ghosts?

In one of those sudden pauses which descend on collective conversations, we posed this question in the saloon. Here we were, twenty-one of us—each knowing practically nothing of the others—assembled from all over the earth, and brought together on this ship, each of us with his hopes and ambitions and each with his hidden load of sorrow. The atmosphere was hushed and on a sudden each of us looked into his soul. Were we ghosts upon a ghostly ship on a ghostly ocean?

The captain was with us—a pale, thin man. "Have we any ghosts on this ship?", asked Gammans, breaking the uneasy silence. "No—not on this ship," said the captain. Gammans noticed the emphasis on the *this* and scenting a story, asked for it. "This," began the captain, "is a true story, you can make of it what you will. . . .

"I have a friend. He is second in command of the —. The other day he told me this story, for the truth of which he vouches. During the war he had on board, on one voyage, some young cadets who used to take material from the chartroom for study. They were supposed to bring the books, etc., back by a certain time at night. One day one of the cadets was late in

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returning his books. My friend left word that the boy was to report to him when he did come back with the books and went on to his term of duty on the bridge. After an hour or so he noticed as, pacing the bridge, he turned on his heels at one end of it, a cadet beginning to ascend the ladder on the port side. My friend did not wait for him, thinking to meet him when he returned to the head of the ladder on his next turn. When he came back the boy was not to be seen. He thought it strange, but concluded that the boy had suddenly remembered something and had gone back for it. After another interval, the boy came up the ladder on the starboard side, reported and apologized for being late with the books. My friend said to him 'Did you come up the ladder on the port side a few minutes ago?' 'No, sir,' said the boy. 'Sure?' asked my friend. 'Certain, sir,' said the boy. '*There is no ladder there!*' Then my friend recollected, what it was curious that he should have forgotten, that the port ladder had indeed been taken down because of damage in an action. And he recollected too that another cadet had been killed on that same ladder in that same action. My friend says that he saw the boy with complete clarity, and noted the details of his dress, and so on.

"Now," said the captain. "You can put your own construction on that strange story. But it is true. And my friend had no doubt whatever that what he saw on the non-existent ladder was the ghost of that poor dead cadet."

This morning the fog has gone. In its place a gale is blowing. I rise and wallow in a hot bath of sea water, and feel it comfortingly seep into my bones. After breakfast a tug comes alongside and a pilot comes aboard. Are we off at last? No—not yet! Since the tanker from which we are to get our fuel for the voyage hasn't come down from Glasgow to us, we must, it seems, go up to Glasgow to it. Thus the pilot. It is now Wednesday. Three days so far on this journey, and I have got as far as Glasgow!

I meditate upon the appalling inefficiency one meets with in so many walks of life. How rare it is to find a mechanic to whom one can trust one's car with complete confidence that he will do the required repairs properly! The other day a friend of mine at Rugby took his car into a garage to get a puncture repaired. A few days later the same tyre was punctured again. My friend was present when the tyre was removed. Inside the tyre was the

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spanner which had been used on the tyre a few days previously! How rare it is to find a secretary—like my own—on whom one can utterly rely to do the sensible and appropriate thing in one's absence! How much scamped and careless work there is in the world! And what joy can people get out of such work!

There are many things wrong in Britain. One of the worst is the growing prevalence of the type of mind which gives as little as it can in return for as much as it can take. That is extremely serious—especially to-day. If that type of mind is prevalent in the industries we are going to nationalize, every such industry will require to be heavily subsidized by the State. In that event, nationalization will be a curse instead of being, as it is claimed, a blessing.

Meantime three days of precious time—the only thing in which we are permanently rationed—has been wasted by the inefficiency of somebody or other who first cannot arrange that a tanker should go to Belfast to fuel a big ship instead of bringing the big ship to the Clyde, and second, cannot arrange that when the big ship does come to the Clyde the tanker should be there to meet it, without inordinate delay. Still I gather that air-travel is not very much better. My colleague, Tom Horrabin, who often crosses the Atlantic, told me the other day that on the average he has been held up for four days on each of the last half a dozen crossings he has made. He says that air-travel is all right if you have plenty of time! Robert Louis Stevenson used to say that it was better to travel hopefully than to arrive. I hold that it is better to travel hopefully *and* to arrive. To-day we travel unhopefully and with a good prospect of not arriving at all!

Conversation this morning runs on repartee, and I contribute one or two examples.

Lord Castlerosse was a great wit as well as a *bon viveur*. He did not suffer fools, or bores, gladly. On one occasion a lady was boasting to him of her numerous conquests amongst the male sex. The counting of the scalps became wearisome, and when the lady described how her last lover had thrown himself at her feet in a transport of adoration, Castlerosse could stand no more. "Madame," said he, "*Pearls have been found in that situation!*"

Mr. Pickthorn, who sits for Cambridge University, has a quick wit. Not long ago he was attacking the Government for letting down Poland at the Yalta Conference. Lord Winterton,

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whose Christian name is Edward, interrupted, and Pickthorn "gave way" to allow Winterton to make his point. When he had done so, Pickthorn resumed. "*I had hoped,*" he said, "*that I was carrying the noble lord with me in full stream. But I find that what I am confronted with is merely a backward 'Eddy'!*"

Sir Arthur Salter can tell a story against himself. On one occasion after the first World War he went into his club. An unfamiliar attendant said to him, "*Excuse me, but are you a member here?*" "*I'm not only a member,*" said Salter, somewhat annoyed, "*I've been a member for three whole years!*" "*I'm very sorry, sir,*" said the attendant. "*I've been away four years—in France.*"

Malcolm Sargent tells a story of the marriage of the daughter of a Master of Trinity House. It was arranged that after the ceremony the happy couple should pass, on leaving the church, beneath an arch of oars held up by Thames boatmen. A woman with her child watched with interest amongst the onlookers. "O, mummy!" said the child, "look at them oars!" "Hush, child," said the mother, "them's not 'ores! Them's bridesmaids!"

CHAPTER 7



Obstacles to Clarity of Thought — Generalizations — The Impulse to Opposites

IN the preceding chapter we became, I fear, a little frivolous, but a man must relax sometimes. In this chapter we will recapture our habitual gravity, and take as our subject: "Some Obstacles to Clarity of Thought."

The two greatest obstacles to clear thinking are (1) the habit of generalizing and (2) the impulse to opposites.

All generalizations are untrue, except this one! For in the first place all generalizations rest on a partial and limited selection of the facts—the facts which conflict with the generalization have to be ignored in order to achieve the generalization. There is a sense in which one cannot know the truth about anything without first knowing the truth about everything—for everything is affected and conditioned by everything else. (That incidentally is why the most important thing about a man is his religion. For religion concerns itself with the Whole.) And since it is not given to us to know all truth, it follows that we cannot know the whole truth about anything. So that the generalization is not only based on a limited selection of facts; but these facts themselves are inadequately appreciated. Thus a generalization can be at best only an approximation—more or less close to, more or less remote from, truth. But there is another element which vitiates the generalizations. That is the mind of the person who selects the facts upon which the generalization is based. One person will take such and such facts. Another will take a different selection. The generalizations drawn by the two persons will thus be completely different. And both will be wrong. Therefore all generalizations should be mistrusted.

Let us take the nature of matter, and consider how the generalizations on this subject have fared during one man's lifetime.

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When I first went to school I was told that the smallest bit of matter was "the particle." What that was nobody seemed to know. A few years later, the smallest bit of matter had ceased to be "the particle," and had become "the molecule." A few years later still, and the smallest bit of matter was the atom. Here we seemed to have reached finality. The atom was round, hard, indivisible. And all the matter of the Universe was compounded of atoms. Time marched on; and it was discovered that the atom was not hard, solid, indivisible. It consisted mostly of space. Each atom was, in fact, a whirling solar system on its own—a system in which electrons moved about the nucleus with the regularity and immutability of the movement of the planets around the sun. This seemed to be the end, but I knew in my bones that we still hadn't reached finality. A universe composed of such atoms would be far more static than I had (unaided) observed the Universe to be! And sure enough, before many more years had passed the scientists discovered that inside the atom there was something which did not move in a regular orbit. It observed no orbit at all, but moved like the spirit, "where it listed." It was "the sportive proton." A grand little fellow, this! As soon as he was discovered I knew what my political future was to be! It was this little chap who made all the difference between a static and a dynamic Universe. Not subject to Party discipline, not a victim of the "Closed Shop," not a prisoner of any of the generalizations, he was just my idea of what a proton should be. He lived, and so the Universe was alive.

Still later, the scientists began to suspect that it was doubtful whether the atom really existed. The electrons of which it was composed might, it seemed, be no more than the point of contact between positive and negative layers of electricity, which wasn't matter at all. And then Sir William Crookes began to speculate about what might happen to the Universe if someone discovered a means of making the positive and negative chords cancel out! The atom was a vast storehouse of force. The shadow of the atom bomb began to creep across the face of the earth—long before the first bomb fell on Hiroshima and added another horrible example of man's inhumanity to man, to the long list of the past.

In medicine, the generalizations have fared no better. It is sufficient for a medical hypothesis to be proclaimed for it to be discarded within a few years in favour of another. When Pasteur

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formulated the germ theory of disease he was ridiculed and derided. Before his death it won general acceptance; and ever since then people have been vaccinated with the lymph of diseased cows and innoculated with preparations and injections of all kinds to safeguard them from one disease or another. But the naturopath asserts that all of us carry in our systems the germs of practically all diseases. What determines whether we shall develop the disease or not is whether the system provides a suitable "soil" for its development. That depends on the condition of the blood stream. Purify that, says the naturopath, and you can cock a snook at the malevolent little germs. Recently a Harley Street friend of mine gravely informed me that after thirty years of practice he had come to the conclusion that practically all disease was mental in its origin. The sickness of man's soul expressed itself in the illness of the body. The allopath and the homoeopath, the orthodox doctor and the neuropath, the Harley Street specialist, the spiritual healer and the Christian Science practitioner can also support their generalizations with a mass of facts and equally impressive cases. And the wise man learns to be his own doctor.

Distrust the generalizations, especially in things where human beings are concerned—such as politics, or economics. For of all factors, the human factor is the most difficult to assess and to generalize about.

It is one of the curses of democracy that it puts a premium on the generalization. No political problem is simple. But it has to be simplified in order to bring it within the comprehension of the mass electorates of modern times. So the generalization takes the place of the facts, and the slogan becomes the substitute for thought. When I consider the slogans of the political parties in Britain in the General Elections I have seen since 1906, I marvel at the credulity of the human mind, and conclude that there is—but for the special mercy of God!—no hope for the human race.

"Three acres and a cow!" "The Big Loaf and the Little Loaf!" "Down with the House of Lords!" "Hang the Kaiser and Make Germany Pay!" "Vote for Baldwin and Tranquillity!" "Support the League of Nations!" "Labour will Face the Future!" These, and their like, have been the electoral pabulum of an age which has seen two world wars, the rise and fall of two dictatorships, the continued survival of a third, the destruction of most of the great cities of half a continent, and the coming of the atomic

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bomb! They have had about as much to do with political reality as my foot!

The second great obstacle to clarity of thought is what I describe as the "impulse to opposites." The basic error of this impulse is the assumption that the cure for a given condition of things is its opposite. It isn't true. The cure for excessive heat is not excessive cold, the cure for hunger is not overfeeding, and the cure for constipation is not diarrhoea! But in politics we act as if it were.

Thus the system known as Capitalism, and which is characterized by the private ownership of the land and the means of life, is marked by certain undesirable features such as unemployment and poverty. So, yielding to the "impulse of opposites," we rush to the assumption that the remedy is the public ownership of everything. If we get that, poverty and unemployment will disappear.

It may or it may not. As Joad would say, "It all depends . . ." But one thing is sure. In the change over we shall produce all sorts of things which we did not reckon with in the original syllogism. Among them is a vast bureaucracy. Already two out of every twenty wage earners in Britain are either civil or municipal servants. And most of their labour is, in the strict sense of the word, unproductive. They not only do not produce wealth, they have to be sustained out of the wealth produced by the productive workers in Society. In the completely socialized State the inroads upon the wealth produced due to the need for maintaining a vast bureaucracy may prove to be greater even than the depredations of the hated "capitalist class."

Another thing we shall produce is the complete enslavement of the worker. For you can only ensure full employment by making it obligatory on the worker to go wherever he is sent. The Russians make no bones about this. They transport whole populations—willynilly—to where they want to utilize their labour. A third thing we shall produce is a vast amount of nepotism. We are seeing this in Britain to-day. With each new industry the State takes over there is a nice crop of well-paid jobs to distribute. In the old days we used to send our worn-out politicians to the House of Lords. Now we put them on to the boards, national or local, of the nationalized industries.

Another thing we shall produce is the end of liberty—of thought, and expression. For if and when the State takes to itself

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all economic power, it in fact takes to itself *all* power. No governing class ever uses power save in its own interests. The dominant class in a Socialist State will use its power—vastly greater than that of the ruling class in a Capitalist State—to confirm its own dominance. It has the power to make it impossible for its opponents and its critics to live. And, as the Russian experience shows, it uses this power to compel conformity, in every phase of life, to the pattern laid down by the dictatorship.

In Britain, long before this phase is reached, we shall, of course, have rebelled against the tendency of things. If we don't, it will be too late to rebel afterwards. The power of the totalitarian State to prevent rebellion is limitless. And its exercise is correspondingly ruthless.

Another example of the "impulse to opposites" is provided in the housing problem in Britain. Before the war, private enterprise built four out of every five houses that were built in Britain. It built them in the main for sale. Mr. Bevan, our Minister of Health, decided that he would see that houses were built, not for sale, but for rent.

Now personally, if there were no more in it than a choice between building for sale and building for renting, I would agree with Aneurin Bevan. But there is much more in it than that. It involved choosing an agency for this building for renting: and the only alternative to private enterprise was the Local Authorities. Now the Local Authorities are doubtless very worthy bodies. But they are extremely slow-moving, as committees always are. And since the people who were to rent the houses would in the main be poor, the decision also involved a heavy subsidy on each house. Even with the subsidy many builders found that they could not build for the Local Authorities at the stipulated price, and they found all the restrictions which they had to overcome intolerably vexing. So many of them turn to doing repairs. A vast black market develops in repair work which alienates from the building of houses a large number of skilled building workers. This the Ministry of Works attempts to counteract by appointing large numbers of inspectors. But since the repairs being done inside a house are not visible from the outside many of them are unpreventable by this means. The upshot of this series of decisions is (a) that fewer houses have been built than could have been built; (b) that they have been built at fantastically high prices; and (c) that an appalling sum will have to be found by that part

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of the population which does not live in council houses to keep rents low for those who do.

What Aneurin Bevan overlooked, in yielding to his "impulse to opposites" was that his job was not primarily to build houses for renting, but to build *houses*. Every house built meant, either at first hand or at one stage removed, another family accommodated in a home. By subordinating everything to getting houses built in the *order* he wanted—for letting first and for sale afterwards—Aneurin Bevan has got fewer houses than he could have got, and at an appalling cost. This cost factor will probably, sooner or later, break down the whole scheme.

The truth is that strategy cannot properly be decided without a due regard for tactics. The "right" strategical decision may well prove to be the "wrong" strategical decision if it involves tactical consequences which vitiate the strategy itself!

Now our politics are flooded with this kind of "impulse to opposites." And it is worse under a Labour Government than under the Conservative one, because the Labour Party has far more Members whose political training has been of the theoretical kind, or whose industrial experience has been as workman rather than as practical business man, than has the Tory Party. It is, I think, a great pity that the Labour Party superseded the Liberal Party. The contribution which the Labour men had to give to Parliament, given inside the Liberal Party and qualified by the business experience of that Party, would have been extremely valuable. On its own, and unrestrained, it can produce calamitous results.

CHAPTER 8



Post-War Difficulties for the Young — The “Nineteen-Thirty-Niners” — Loss of Liberty

YESTERDAY afternoon—Wednesday—the tanker turned up and soon 600 tons of fuel were piped from her to us. We have, I gather, saved some twenty pounds by getting this fuel here rather than in Belfast. Against this has to be set the cost of keeping crew and passengers—the crew in wages and grub, the passengers in food—for three unnecessary days, the cost of losing three days’ service by the ship, and the cost of all the time the passengers have lost which they might have turned to good account! The thing is a parable on what I have been writing. Look only at one element in a problem—in this case the actual money cost of the fuel—and you reach one conclusion. Look at all the factors in the situation—and you reach the opposite conclusion!

It has rained steadily the whole time we have been in the Clyde since the fog lifted. And all I’ve seen of Scotland has been the blurred outline of the Banks o’ Clyde from the ship’s sides. Now, at long last, we have begun our journey. But—another parable this!—note how the consequences of initial error follow on to the end. It is now improbable that we can get to Jamaica until the 24th December even if we make Kingston by then. But *then* the Christmas holidays will have begun. The darkies will not load this ship then. She will have to wait until after Christmas. Two or three more lost days will have to be added to the three days we have already lost!

Half a million people in Britain are awaiting passages out of it to some other part of the earth. The figure is not quite so formidable as seems, for, during six years and more, the normal annual flow of emigrations has been dammed up. But it is formidable enough. Why do so many of our young men and

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women wish to shake from their feet the dust—or since we never see the sun, the mud!—of their native land:

There are, I think, many elements in it. Scores of thousands of our young men have seen, during the war, other parts of the world. Thousands were trained in South Africa and Canada. There they saw a different life, a new country. There they made contacts which ripened into friendships. Had they never left England they might not now wish to go out into the unknown. But to scores of thousands of them, it is not now the unknown.

A second element is the difficulty, for young men and women, to obtain anywhere to live in Britain. No one who has not endured it can understand the psychological and social effects upon a young man and woman, who having married during the war, cannot now set up home, but must either live separated each in the home of the parent, or together in the home of the parents of one of them. Never, I suppose, in my lifetime, was it so difficult to get a house nor so difficult and so expensive to furnish it. When I married, £60 furnished two bedrooms, a sitting-room and a kitchen. In 1935 or thereabouts, I furnished a country cottage for £150. You would need all that to-day to furnish a couple of rooms. That is if you can get the priority dockets, the licences, the permits and all the rest of the paraphernalia required for the purchase of anything nowadays! The reaction to this is—"For God's sake let's try somewhere else. It can't be worse and it may be better."

A third element is the difficulty of getting a business going in Britain. For during the war the "Nineteen-Thirty-Niners" have established a kind of "closed shop" against new entrants into business. Thus you can't take a taxi or a lorry on to the streets and ply for hire without a permit, which will only be given if you can "demonstrate that a public need" for it exists. You can't open a shop without a permit from the local housing authority—unless you had one in 1938. The supply of many goods is limited to firms which were "in the business" in 1939. You can't start a new journal or newspaper with any hope of making it pay, because the vast bulk of the available newsprint goes to the Nineteen-Thirty-Niners. Papers started since then receive only a derisory ration upon which it is impossible to make a paper pay. You can't even make and sell toffee apples unless you were so engaged in 1939! For many articles obtained from abroad

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you cannot get an Import licence unless you were in the same business in 1939.

Of course, an argumentative case can be made out for all these and other restrictions. Everything is short. If we are to have fairness we must have rationing. You can't have rationing working smoothly if anyone is allowed to butt in, so to speak. But the net effect is to make young men feel that Britain doesn't want them, and to make them turn their eyes elsewhere, where opportunity still beckons.

A fourth element is the feeling that personal liberty is becoming, and will become, more and more circumscribed and limited as time goes by. This is not so much because of any particular piece of legislation which the Labour Government has adopted. The ordinary man and woman is not affected very much by the Exchange Control Bill and such-like measures. It is due to a series of things, each limited in itself, but all of which, added together, produce the impression that the maintenance of liberty is not one of the preoccupations of the Government. People note the Government's passivity in face of the "Closed Shop," the attack on the freedom of the Press, the hostility of the Minister of Health to anybody who wants to own his own house—which most people instinctively want to do—the general minatory tone of so many Ministerial utterances. They feel that the "shades of the prison house" are beginning to enclose the growing boy—so to speak. Much of the Socialism of the Government impresses them not as the Socialism of love, but the Socialism of hate. They divine that we are moving from Morris to Marx; and the prospect repels. For the love of liberty—the dislike of being shoved around, is very deep in us.

A fifth element—and a strong one—is the feeling that "England has had it." They see that the war has fundamentally and irretrievably altered the place of Britain in the world scheme of things. The bonds of Commonwealth and Empire which, as a united entity could stand amongst the Great Powers, are visibly snapping. Alone, Britain is a small island off the north-west coast of Europe—its 40 millions of inhabitants making numerically a poor show against the 190 millions of the Russians, and the 132 millions of Americans. People divine that if an atomic war comes—and so far UNO. has not given us much solid reason to be sure that it won't—Britain would present the most highly concentrated military target in the world. It would take

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quite a lot of atomic bombs to wipe out Russia and quite a lot to delete the United States. Twenty bombs, suitably dropped on our major cities, could put us out of action in the first twenty-four hours of war.

And so, what with one thing and another—half a million British men and women want to go elsewhere. There are some extremely serious aspects to this. The first is that this half-million consists in the main of young men and women—and these the most enterprising of their age group. If we could transport a representative cross-section of our people—the young, the middle-aged, and the old, the case would be different. Mr. Bevan might possibly welcome it as easing our housing problem. But when it is almost exclusively the young who go, leaving the middle-aged and the old behind, the effect is seriously to emphasize a problem which is already taking on a very serious aspect.

When a declining birth rate persists over many years, the ultimate effect is to disturb the balance of the age-groupings of the community as a whole. There are more and more old people to be kept, and fewer and fewer young people to produce the things to keep them. By 1960 that problem will have attained serious dimensions. If half a million of our young folk go it will be serious long before then. And every improvement in Social Insurance Benefits will make it worse.

What, then, are we to forbid our young men to go? Are we to make it as difficult for them to get away from Britain as the Communist Government of Russia makes it for anyone to leave the "Worker's Paradise." Lord, no! But we should take into account, in all our domestic policies, this factor that if you try to ride a people with too tight a curb, its brightest and best, denied any other remedy, will go elsewhere.

The whole emphasis of our current legislation is on fairness. It is for fairness' sake that the vast mass of restrictive rules and regulations, prohibitions, permits, licences, etc., have been imposed. It is difficult to argue against fairness. But if the result of trying to be mathematically fair, is that we produce a situation in which energy is repressed and enterprise discouraged, if people feel that they can't breathe, we should pay a little less attention to mathematical fairness, and a little more to releasing the creative energies of our people.

There is on board a civil servant who has worked throughout

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the war in Zanzibar. They had similar controls, regulations, licences, etc., there as we had in Britain. They had the "closed shop" of the Nineteen-Thirty-Nines, as we had. They swept the lot away. With what result? Many of the Nineteen-Thirty-Niner monopolists caught a bad cold. The assured market, the certain profits, which they had enjoyed for many years disappeared for them. New challengers arose. But the net result was very good for Zanzibar. New, urgent, competitive life surged through the community. The stick-in-the-muds were jerked out of their State-insured complacency. The whole economy of the island was stimulated and revitalized.

Belgium proclaims the same lesson. They had to choose between trying to enforce by multitudinous controls a mathematical "fairness" on the one hand, and getting their shattered economy going again as quickly as possible and with the utmost vigour. They offended every canon which we have sought to observe. They tolerated the black market. They allowed people to make profit. The result? Everybody buckled to with a will. They have worked in all classes with a vigour and energy unexampled in Britain. As goods have been produced the level of prices in the black market has fallen steadily. Soon there will be no difference between black market and ordinary prices. Petrol rationing has gone. Soon most rationing will have gone. They are functioning at a 100 per cent level, while in Britain we are functioning at somewhere about 60 per cent level.

I do not urge that in Britain, where many things are different from either Zanzibar or Belgium we should throw all our controls out of the window overnight. I do urge, however, that we should recognize that a steadily decreasing share of a smaller cake is not the end we wish to attain. And that we must qualify mathematical fairness by some regard to the maintenance of incentives to production—without which no community can function at a 100 per cent level.

CHAPTER 9



*David Gammans, M.P. — Local Party
Organizations*

IT is Thursday midday. We have had a smooth first night at sea running down the Irish Channel. Now we are south of Ireland. When we leave Ireland astern we shall not see land again, until, four days hence, we sight the Azores. The weather is milder. The rain has ceased. The ship pitches backwards and forwards over the long rolling waves, but does not roll from side to side. There is even an occasional gleam of watery sunlight. Our spirits, depressed from three days of waiting and of cold and rain, take a turn upwards.

Captain Gammans, M.P., has developed the habit of falling asleep without warning at all sorts of odd hours. He is obviously extremely tired and worn out. He takes his Parliamentary work very seriously, even more seriously than I do. Every Friday evening he is available to his constituents from 5.30 to 10.0 p.m.—and sees on the average fifty of them at each such sitting. He wrote personally—after the last election—to each of the 6,000 constituents of his who were serving in the armed forces. He has built up the strength of the Hornsey Conservative Association from about 400 in 1945 to 4,000 this year, and hopes to be up to 6,000 before long. In the old days it was the Conservative M.P.s with “safe” seats who sometimes never went near their divisions from one election to the next. When, in 1942, I fought and won Rugby, I promised nothing except that if elected I would speak and vote in the House as I thought right; and that I would go to the constituency once a month to report what I had been doing. That second pledge, which I have religiously kept, won me many votes, for the Division had not seen a great deal of the Conservative Member who preceded me.

The Conservatives—if David Gammans is an example—appear to have learnt the lesson that Members must not neglect

their divisions or their constituents, if they wish to retain their seats. But Gammans has been overdoing it. And now that the tension is relaxed, he is, as I say, falling asleep at all sorts of odd moments all over the ship.

He lives near the division he represents. This has certain advantages, but certain disadvantages. You are certainly "on the spot" so far as your constituents are concerned, but Members who live in or near the divisions they represent find it very difficult to keep out of the local politics of the constituency. And whatever you do in local politics, you may be sure that it will be wrong!

I question, too, whether it is good to concentrate so much on building up a local Association. Wherever you get an organization, you get jealousies, feuds, and rows. Moreover, organization is the enemy of good improvisation. The "planning," inflexible, machine takes charge of things. And it cannot respond to emergencies and to unexpected turns in the situation as one man can do. In Rugby I have no organization. But I've some thousands of friends. And when the summons goes out they spontaneously rally round. The improvised organization which is then created is far more flexible—and apparently not less efficient—than the machines that have been working for years.

A month or so before the election of 1945 I found myself sitting at lunch with Mr. Ernest Brown, M.P. He said: "W. J.! What are your prospects in Rugby?" I said: "I've a Conservative candidate against me on one side, and a Labour candidate on the other. Mathematically I haven't a chance. But it's a conviction of mine that Providence is not a Mathematician, but a Poet. And poetic justice requires that I should beat all comers!"

He said: "You should be in a Party and have an organization behind you. It'll be just too bad for you chaps who are 'out on a limb' when the election comes." The election duly came, and when it was over, Ernest was "out" at Aberdeen, and I was "in," with a doubled majority, at Rugby—which, as I told my Rugby folk to whom I related the story, just shows you the importance of not being Ernest!

Apropos of that election I must tell a couple of stories. On polling day an old gentleman came into my committee rooms and asked at what polling station he should vote. "Where do you live?" he was asked. "At 17 Dale Street," he replied. "Then you vote at Dale Street Schools," he was told.

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He toddled happily off. But within twenty minutes he was back again. "You told me all wrong," he complained. "What do you mean," he was asked. "Well you told me to vote at Dale Street Schools. But they're all voting for Lakin there. I want *Mr. Brown's* polling station." This, after seventy years of free education!

In a small village, a farm worker came to vote. A Conservative "teller" was on duty outside the polling station. "Who do you want to vote for?" asked the teller. "I've come to vote for Mr. Brown," said the farm worker. "Splendid! Splendid!" said the wicked Conservative. "But don't make any mistake with your ballot paper, like a lot of 'em round here. When you've put your cross against Mr. Brown's name, don't forget to sign the paper!"

Gammans is a Party man—though sometimes he votes against "the Party line." He believes in the Party system, a matter I will say something about later if my mind gets around to it. But if we must have the Party system I would plead for two things. The first is that we should have at least a couple of score or so of really good Independents in Parliament who are free to take a line on the merits of issues as they come before the House. And the second is that we should lay it down that a Government should not be dismissed save by a straightforward motion of "No Confidence."

In the Commons we vote on scores and hundreds of issues in the course of a Session. Nominally that is. But actually we are voting all the time on one issue only—"Should the Government continue, or should it be dismissed?" For, under our present practice, if a Government is beaten in the lobbies on any major issue, it must resign.

If it were laid down that the Government should only be dismissed on a motion of "No Confidence," Members could be much freer to vote on the merits of cases than they are now. For they would be able to dismiss from their minds the fear that if they voted as they believed right, they might be causing the fall of a Government of whose general policy they approved and which they wished to preserve.

This single change would do more to vitalize Parliament than any I can think of. As things are, Parliamentary speeches seldom influence votes in the division lobbies, for votes are cast not on

David Gammans, M.P.

the issue before the House but (on Party lines) on the issue of preserving or destroying a Government. This, so long as a Government can keep its followers together, makes a Government independent of the merits of a case, and of the House of Commons alike. It reduces Members of Parliament to robots, automatons and "lobby-fodder." It is bad for Parliament, bad for Government, and bad for Britain.

Every time a man votes against the convictions of his heart and mind, something in him dies a little. Let him do it too often, and it dies altogether. A free Parliament can be a nursery of greatness. A hog-tied one can be the ante-chamber of totalitarian dictatorship—Fascist or Communist as the case may be. And there's very little difference between them in most respects.

It is very difficult to see the period of time in which one is living, with the eye of historical perspective. If we could do so, says Gammans, who, I repeat, is a Tory, we should probably recognize that it is a good thing that there is a Labour Government in Britain to-day. We shan't get on an even keel, he thinks, until (1) the virus of class hatred is worked out of our social system; (2) the Trade Union leaders recognize that nothing but adequate production will "service" the nation and that to secure this there is no substitute for work; and (3) nationalization of some industries has been tried out. Nationalization has developed a "mystique" of its own. Nothing but trying it out will bring it to the test of practicality, and take from it its quasi-religious aspect.

CHAPTER 10



Fellow-Passengers — Thoughts on M.P.s

WHEN one starts a voyage on a ship, especially a small ship like this, one looks at one's fellow-passengers when one sees them assembled for the first time, and says, with perhaps a slight sinking of the heart "Are these the people with whom I must spend the whole of the next fourteen days?" or whatever the length of the voyage may be. One knows nothing of them. They don't look particularly bright! One sees them in the lump, and wonders, and is afraid. Of course, each of them is doing similarly, only *you* come within the scope of *their* scrutiny. And in spite of the fund of knowledge concealed within your brain, in spite of your wit and charm—so well known to your friends—you seem to them no more impressive than they look to you. If you could get inside their minds you would find them saying something like this. "Not imposing—that fellow! Carelessly dressed, fingers stained with nicotine, pretty thin on top, politician they say, probably an awful bore . . . !

Only gradually does your individual fellow-traveller emerge from the ranks of "the anonymous collective"; only gradually does he or she cease to be "one of them," and become an individual in his or her own right. That process after three days fooling around between Belfast and the Clyde and after a couple of days at sea, is now under way. Gammans I know, of course, as a Parliamentary colleague. He is becoming a human being and a fine type of human being at that. For he "makes some conscience of what he does." In our political Party struggles we must, in order to hate our opponents sufficiently to hit them hard enough, mentally shove them away from us, and depict them to ourselves as villains. To the Socialist, the Conservative is by definition a capitalist, self-seeking, hard-hearted, an exploiter of the masses, an oppressor of the poor and fatherless. To the Conservative, the Socialist is a reckless destroyer, animated by class hatred, malice,

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envy and all uncharitableness, wantonly jeopardizing the heritage of the past, tampering with things he does not know, or knows only from books, of which it is well known that he who increases them, increases sorrow. Actually Tories and Socialists are, when you make allowances for their differing environments and backgrounds, extraordinarily alike, and for the most part—although there are some unlovely mean fellows on both sides—extraordinarily likeable.

When they meet each other "off duty" it is the things they have in common which come to the surface. In politics it is the things which divide. And how much they have in common—the good fellows, I mean. A common love for England. A common regard for the strange history of our race. A common recognition that with all its faults the English way of life is the best there is, and that it means something in the world. A common religious background—yes, whether they be ostensibly religious or not. For the Christian heritage is woven into every fibre of our national life, and even where we appear to disregard its implications, we do so with a sense of sin. A common glory of literature, with Shakespeare and the King James version of the Bible at its towering summit. And finally, however much political diagnosis differs, a common decency.

It is part of the unconscious genius of the House of Commons that its physical structure compels Members of opposing Parties to meet off duty. For all the common-rooms are too small—the libraries, the dining-room, and the smoking-room. So we are thrust into a compulsory contiguity one with another. You can't have—for space does not allow—all the Tories at one end of a common-room and all the Socialists at the other. Wherever he sits an M.P. will find himself talking to an opponent. And when he talks he discovers that his opponent whom he had thought of as a "crusted Tory" or a "b—— Socialist," as the case may be, is in fact a very human chap like himself. He, too, has had reverses. He, too, has had trouble with the missus, and certainly with the kids. For this is the common lot of man!

And so it is that the political divide which separates us is partly spanned by our common humanity. We still think our opponents mistaken, for that is the condition of believing ourselves right. But we cannot wholeheartedly believe that they are scoundrels of the deepest dye!

After the last election, Herbert Morrison warned the new

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Labour M.P.s against "the smoking-room." This was a bad sign. When our political faiths become so badly founded or so precariously held that we dare not expose them to personal contact with the enemy we shall be in a bad way. Personally I never refuse to dine with a man merely because he is rich!

Mrs. Gammans, whom I had not met before—a good, level-headed, shrewd woman, devoted to her "David." A tower of strength, I should judge, to her husband, for she seconds his own laborious work with continual and sustained domestic visitation of his constituents on her own account.

Then there is an East Indian doctor. He has served with the British forces throughout the war. He is not black, but light-brown. So he has been tucked away in a corner in the dining-saloon together with another West Indian, a lawyer from Trinidad. This is not the colour-discrimination of some Poonah-Wallah—but of the steward. The other day I went into the saloon smoking. There was no ash tray on my table. I went to the side-board for one. Noticing that the West Indian lawyer was also smoking and that his table likewise had no ash tray, I took two, and put one on his table. In the look he gave me, swift and almost passionably appreciative, I divined something of his earlier hurt.

Then there is an English Colonial Civil Servant from Zanzibar. He is the Assistant Administrator General there, and hopes to return as the Administrator General, that post having fallen vacant. A fine type of public servant, thus. In Zanzibar they have a native problem and an Indian problem. He is troubled at the attitude—not of the administration, but of the European population, to both.

Then there are three women teachers, on their way to take up teaching posts in the West Indies. I haven't got to grips with these yet, but they look to be good, competent women.

Then there is a tragic-looking, finely-drawn woman of about fifty. She was a "high-up" in the W.R.N.S. during the war. She resigned her job a fortnight or so ago, and is now on her way to 'a three-months' stay in Jamaica to look into some property interests she has there. Poor woman, her husband, a naval officer, went down with his ship during the war.

With her is her daughter, Lady Twysdew. She is a rather pretty, slightly made girl of twenty-five. Her story is very sad. Her fiance at the age of twenty-three was taken prisoner. He spent five years as a prisoner of war in eastern Germany. He came home

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and married this girl. Then he developed that obscure disease—Hodgkin's disease. I gather that it consists in violent departure from normality in the proportion of white to red corpuscles in the blood. This gives rise to pressure on the various glands. It is incurable. After a year spent alternately in hospital and in their cottage, he died, at twenty-eight. Poor fellow! Poor girl! She puts a brave face on things. He died two months ago. At first she was too dazed for pain. Then the body-rending pain of utter loss seized her. She bears up publicly, but it is pitiful to watch her face. The one service I can do her is to listen while she talks of him, of how good he was, and how cheerfully and bravely he accepted his strange doom. And of how happy, in spite of all, that one brief year of marriage had been. Yesterday, we were standing at the front of the ship, the wind almost blowing through us. "One of the last things he said when he was in hospital was that he longed to feel the wind blowing in his face again. Now it is . . ." she said.

There's a Mrs. Knight aboard, a middle-aged, kindly woman, exuding Lancashire all around her. There's a Mrs. Montgomery who always seems to be tangled up with her bag, her rug, and the lead of the little dog she has brought with her, and is perpetually trying to sort herself out. There's a rather beautiful young wife returning to the Indies, whose speech has an attractive throaty drawl. But she and one or two others are "under the weather," and keep to their bunks.

There's a Scot with a little son of four who has been ill with pneumonia. The father is taking him to a softer climate to recuperate. The boy is devoted to his daddy and his daddy to him. But the little one, too, is beginning to be affected by the pitching of the ship, and looks listless and tired.

There we are. Each of us is a tragedy. Each of us is grotesque. Each of us has his or her own dignity. Each of us carries with him his own mystery. In these, if in no other, respects, all men and women are equal. Twenty different fates operating in twenty different environments have brought us together in this ship for a brief span. We shall act and react upon each other. We shall take from, and give to, each other. And then we shall go our separate ways on that journey of life which I deem to have neither beginning nor end, and of which I am sure that whatever else it is, it is not what it seems.

CHAPTER 11



Health Service Act — The Robots of Parliament — India

THIS is the first voyage of the *Eros* since her refitting after her long war service. So a good many things creak a bit. The crew is newly assembled, and so the service hasn't yet reached normal standards. But we are shaking down rapidly.

We have now got the wireless going in the lounge, and feel a little less cut off from the world. It is a very bad set and is much bothered by atmospherics. Moreover, every time anyone rings a bell anywhere in the ship, it practically puts the radio out of action. Still one does catch fugitive and infrequent glimpses of what is happening in the world.

We learnt yesterday that the doctors in the referendum organized by the British Medical Association, have, by a substantial majority, voted against authorizing the B.M.A. to negotiate with the Government as to the terms on which the doctors would operate the new Health Service Act. That is they have voted, in effect, against operating the Act at all.

I voted for that Act, not because I agreed with every clause of it, but because I thought a comprehensive Health Service was badly needed, and that this was at least a shot at providing one. Yet I confess to a feeling of appreciation that the doctors have voted as they have. For Mr. Bevan's attempt to coerce the doctors into taking his terms has to be seen—not as an isolated thing—but as part of a general tendency, and as exhibiting a particular mentality—which is socially disturbing. If the Health Service case stood alone I should probably take a different view. But it has to be seen as one of a number of things which illustrate the growth of a harsh, compulsive, totalitarian spirit, the ultimate outcome of which I greatly fear.

At the beginning of this Parliament, Mr. Morrison made pretty plain what he conceived to be the function of the House of

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Commons. He appropriated all Private Members' Time for the Session, and he did the same thing at the beginning of the Second Session. Members were to deal not with what they wanted to deal, but with what the Government wished them to deal. Parliament was to be a machine for ratifying the decisions and proposals of Government. This point of view is alien to the tradition and to the spirit of Parliament. It imposes upon Parliament some of the quality of a Reichstag.

Next there was the repeal of the Trade Union Act of 1927, and the spirit exhibited in the discussions on this matter. The Trade Union Act of 1927 was undoubtedly a punitive Act. But it contained some clauses of real value. The Government had the opportunity of putting the law relating to Trade Unions upon a basis which would have been unassailable for decades to come. Instead they preferred to repeal the Act *holus-bolus*. The good clauses went with the bad. And so the way was opened for the "closed shop" movement, the application by local authorities of pressure upon teachers, doctors, nurses, etc., to join Trade Unions, and other manifestations of triumphant and exultant tyranny.

Next came the attack on the Press. Nobody denies that the Press is biased. But biases in one direction are cancelled out by biases on the other, and anyway the British are not political infants! Moreover, they have a shrewd idea that if ever Government controlled the Press we should hear only what the Government wished us to hear. Thus the attack was ominous. And most ominously, Mr. Morrison's hand was visibly pulling the strings throughout. And I have an idea that Morrison does not love liberty!

Then there were the attacks launched by Mr. Bevan on private builders, the Building Societies, and indeed on anyone who owned, or wanted to own, a house of his own. We were all—it seemed—social undesirables!

The Coal Nationalization Bill—for which I voted—gave reasonable terms of compensation to the coalowners. I do not love coalowners. I think they have made a mess of the coal industry. I thought nationalization might give us the opportunity of a new start. When the Railway Nationalization Bill was produced, however, I was staggered and alarmed at the compensation terms proposed. It is no more wicked to have invested money in railway shares than in a house, or in land, or any other

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kind of share. And up till now it has been a sound and standing rule that if the State takes away, for good and sufficient reason, the property of the citizen, it should pay fair compensation for it. This Bill violated this canon.

But worse still, as exemplifying the harsh and impatient attitude of Government was the decision that this Bill, for its Committee stage, should "go upstairs"—where only 40 or so M.P.s would have the opportunity of discussing its detailed provisions—instead of being dealt with "on the floor of the House," where many more Members could take part.

The cumulative effect of all these things has been to create in the minds of hundreds of thousands of people who are not Conservative in their outlook, and who on the whole wished the Government well, the gravest misgiving, which might be expressed in the Scriptural phrase—"If they do these things in the green tree, what will they do in the dry?"

I find myself wondering how many of the "No" votes cast in the doctors' referendum have been cast solely on the merits or demerits of the Health Service Act, and how many have been dictated, in whole or in part, by a general distrust and dislike of the harsh, authoritarian temper, the slight concern for justice, exemplified in the things of which I have written. Personally I think a great many.

Now medicine is much more of an art than a science. And in no sense is it a mechanical operation. You can conscript soldiers. You can at a pinch conscript bricklayers and machine-minders. But you cannot compel the practice of good medicine—or good nursing, as Willesden showed.

Personally, I hope the doctors will yet work this Act. But I am not at all unhappy that so marked a rebuff should have been administered to the Government. It will do well to ponder upon its general, as well as its particular, significance, and to take the lesson to heart. For if they are driven too far and fast, if they feel that the Government is being arbitrary and unfair, the English have vast capacities for non-co-operation. In that may yet lie their salvation.

On the radio, too, we learn that Mr. Churchill has demanded and secured a two-day debate on India. India is one of the subjects on which Mr. Churchill feels very deeply. I have a vivid recollection of his line on this matter in the 1929-1931 Parliament, on the Simon Report. It was his attitude on the Simon Report, more

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than anything else, which separated him from his Conservative colleagues, and sent him into the wilderness from which he uttered that series of warning, prophetic speeches, which ultimately led him to the Premiership.

One day I heard him say in his loud, harsh voice: "*They say I have no allies on India. I have one ally on India! It is the ally of events!*" And to-day it seems that he has, indeed, the ally of events. More people have been violently killed and wounded in India these last few months than in the last couple of centuries of British rule.

CHAPTER 12



Fasting — The “Brains Trust” — Broadcasting

TO-DAY—Friday—I have gone without food. Four days of four meals a day, and such splendid meals as we get on board this ship—coupled with the limited exercise which alone is possible in the confines of shipboard life, compel me to cry “Hold—enough!”

The “three square meals a day” beloved of our fathers may be very necessary to the growing child who is active throughout the day. But when we have ceased to grow, when we live, as many of us do, a sedentary life, three square meals a day represent an intolerable burden for the human system. By the time we reach early middle-age, the system is clogged and congested. Appetite disappears. There is a permanent sense of fullness and heaviness, and we find ourselves from time to time victims of the illnesses by which a congested system attempts to throw off its unwanted surpluses. The fast, which can be protracted to several weeks not only without harm but with positive advantage, is an old and salutary remedy. The blood-letting practised by the old-fashioned doctor upon our grandfathers was in fact a means of securing the results of fasting without the self-denial involved in going without food. Blood donors in the recent war found great relief and refreshment in the giving of blood grants. But the more natural way is to fast. When the human system is freed from the burden of coping with three meals a day, the organs of elimination are set free to overtake some of the arrears which have accumulated from the past.

The deliberate abstention from food which I am practising to-day is incomprehensible to those of my fellow-travellers who are not incapacitated by seasickness. Much concern and solicitude is expressed lest I should “fade upon the midnight and cease,” so to speak. This is due to the common illusion that abstention from food makes one weak. On the contrary. When, two years ago,

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I fasted (and I mean fasted; no food at all, not even milk) for fifteen days, I finished doing half a day's writing per day and three hours' walking per day. And felt about fifteen years younger in body and mind. What one at first experiences when abstaining from food is not weakness, but an interruption of settled habit, what one feels is not hunger, but appetite, which is quite a different thing. Real hunger, that is, the deep, agonic, irresistible craving for food which may not be denied, does not assert itself until as long as forty days after the commencement of a fast.

In dietetics a good slogan would be "Back to Moses!" I'm not sure it would be such a bad one in economics, either, allowing, of course, for some changes in the character of our social system as between his day and ours!

Writing in the lounge to-day, with the wireless programme constituting a vocal background, I suddenly heard my own name uttered. It was an announcement that to-morrow a record of my last week's "Brains Trust" would be given in the Overseas programme. I had taken part, with Bertrand Russell, Sir Malcolm Sargent, Sir Arthur Salter, and Margery Fry in this session of the "Brains Trust," and so my name was given with the others. The Trust had, I thought, been pretty good. But the questions they were asked to answer very indifferent. The Brains Trust could be a splendid forum for the discussion of the great public questions—political, social, economic, and moral—of our time. But among the questions we were asked to answer only one had any current social importance, and two were fatuous—such as "Is embarrassment a pain or a pleasure?" and "Is it true that in order to get the most pleasure out of chamber music, you need to be able to play a musical instrument?" Bertrand Russell disposed magnificently and tersely of the first question. "*If it happens to someone else it's a pleasure. If it happens to you it's a pain,*" after which there was no more to be said. On the second we gave Sargent a free run. The one question which had any current social significance was: "What change would you have had, if you could, in your own education"—which did give scope for a brief discussion on education.

The failure to use the Brains Trust as a forum for the discussion of great public issues is not the fault of the very able men and women at the B.B.C. It derives from the fact that the B.B.C. is a State monopoly. This fact affects every part of the B.B.C.

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programmes, from the presentation of the news to the music hall turns. It is very difficult for foreigners to believe that the voice of the B.B.C. is not necessarily the voice of the British Government. Especially is this difficult for the Russians—whose radio, Press, and everything else are “official.” The official tie-up between the B.B.C. and the State, imposes upon it in its treatment of news, restraints and cautions which would not inhibit a private radio network.

This also applies to “Talks” on the B.B.C. In the United States of America there are three nation-wide broadcasting systems, and when I was there in 1941 I was often asked to broadcast over one or other of them. The length of the talk and its subject would be agreed over the telephone. At the agreed hour I would go along to the studio. This would be a large, well-furnished salon. Your friends could go with you and form part of the audience in the room, so that while you spoke you could see what was the reaction to what you were saying, and from it judge the reaction of millions of unseen listeners all over the American continent. My habit was to have half a dozen headings on the back of an envelope, and to speak spontaneously, for the agreed period of time, from these notes. I never committed any indiscretions, nor did the studio audiences. If either I or they had done so, Members of Congress would not have been flooded with letters of protest—nor would there have been questions, and possibly debate, in the House of Representatives. The State would not have been held in any way responsible if there had been any slip-up.

But in Britain it would, or might be. So when one does a talk it must be written out first. Then it must be scrutinized with the utmost care to make sure that, looked at from a dozen angles, no sentence of it might cause misunderstanding at home or abroad. Then it must be “rehearsed” for timing, to make sure that it will take not 14 minutes or 16 minutes, but the precise 15 minutes allowed in the programme. All these things take time, and by the day the talk goes “on the air” it will not be a red-hot topical subject.

When the “Closed Shop” controversy “broke” into the news in 1946, there was a widespread desire on the part of the public to know the “pros” and “cons” of the matter. In the U.S.A. one or other of the radio corporations would immediately and telephonically have arranged for the chairman of the T.U.C. or

some other leading Trade Union figure to state one side of the case, and me, as the leading opponent of the "Closed Shop" to state the other. And the talk would have "gone on" the following day. Actually it was weeks before the British radio gave any comprehensive picture of the issue to the public.

The B.B.C. State tie-up affects the use of the radio for political broadcasting. I hold the view that it doesn't matter how politically controversial the B.B.C. is, provided that it holds the balance fair between the differing points of view. But free, vital, controversial political broadcasting is denied us. The Government, at election times, gets a certain amount of broadcasting time. And so do the principal Opposition Parties. The Independents are squeezed out, but I make no special complaint about that. My point is that political controversy should go on all the time, the only reservation being that both sides of the case should be put with equal freedom. But we do not get this under the present set-up. We get a certain number of rather colourless talks. But the hard-hitting vital week-by-week political debate which is the best form of political education is denied to us.

So with what are called "moral" and "religious" questions. Because of the tie-up between the B.B.C. and State, the B.B.C. must "play for safety." The result is a colourless dullness in many of our programmes.

Now all this is to be deplored even when each side—State and B.B.C. play the game. They don't always do so—especially the State. For "the State" in this connection means for practical purposes the Government. Thus the "guying" and lampooning of public figures is part of the tradition of English public life, part of the tradition of stage and music hall. We have, as a people, the very sound idea that having invested our public men with very great powers, there is a danger that they may take themselves a little too seriously. "All power tends to corrupt," said Lord Acton, "and absolute power corrupts absolutely." So, having conferred great powers on ministers and others, we think it good for their souls and good for the country that wit and humour, parody and lampoon, should keep them aware of the common humanity which they share with the rest of us, but which they may be inclined to forget. The "King's Fool," who might say with impunity the things which the Ruler might not otherwise hear, but which it was desirable he should hear, is a very old institution. Even the Dictators provided a safety-valve in the person of the

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licensed comedian. But it is not long since that Mr. Morrison (Mr. Morrison again!) was putting pressure on the B.B.C. to prevent satirical verses and jokes directed against His Majesty's Ministers! Having got his Royal Commission on the Press, Mr. Morrison doesn't want any loopholes left at the B.B.C.!

What is the remedy for all these things? Various suggestions have been made. One is that we should adopt the American system in which there is no State broadcasting system, but all broadcasting is run by private enterprise and paid for by "advertising." I'm against this. I do not think that we should be left with no alternative but to have our programmes interlarded every few minutes with advertisements for chewing-gum, boots, medicine, and what not, or for specifics against halitosis and body odour!

A second suggestion is that instead of having one State B.B.C. in Britain we should have two or three, in competition one with the other. That might indeed have certain advantages, but it doesn't touch the problems which I have posed. The same disabilities which derive from the fact that broadcasting is State-sponsored would apply to three State-sponsored systems, as to the one State-sponsored system we now have.

The solution I favour is the Canadian system, under which there is one State-sponsored network, but also private networks as well, which are paid for by advertising. The Canadian listener, if he dislikes advertising matter, can listen to the State-sponsored network. If he likes, he can listen to the privately owned networks. Or switch from one to the other as he pleases. The two systems compete with and stimulate each other. The private networks can try out ideas and programmes in which the State-owned system may not be able to be the first experimenter. The State system can be as politically negative as it likes. The privately owned networks can sell time to any Party that wants it. Respectability and risk, sobriety and adventure, can both be catered for, and competition keeps both systems on their toes and up to the minute.

What chance is there of our getting this solution? None whatever, little ones, none whatever! The B.B.C. is now an established and powerful interest. Labour Party ideology forbids any toleration of private enterprise. And its political interests are favoured by a State monopoly.

So the very able and often frustrated men and women of the

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B.B.C. will just go on trying to do the impossible—namely to give us a perfect broadcasting service within the framework of a very imperfect system. And the great British public—since I am an Independent and Independents are frowned on by both the Caucuses whose voices are heard at Broadcasting House—will continue to be denied the opportunity of hearing my voice on any serious public matter! Foreigners can hear it, for they have no votes in Britain. As for the Brains Trust, it will probably continue to be a vehicle of harmless entertainment, where it might in other circumstances be the most vital educational instrument of our times!

CHAPTER 13



*Stormy Weather — English Cooking — State
of the World — Darwin, Marx, and Freud*

LAST night—Friday night—was a very wild one. For we ran into the gale of which we had been forewarned. Sleep was impossible. The ship plunged up and down and from side to side. The night was punctuated by the crash of crockery and glass-ware, the banging of cabin doors shot open and shut by the wind and the rolling of the ship, and by periodic crashes which made the ship shudder all over, when, having been lifted to the crest of a wave, she crashed down into the trough. We have practically no cargo, so the *Eros* rides “high, wide, and handsome.” Where, loaded, she would cut through the waves, unloaded she dances upon them.

This morning our little company is attenuated. The pretty, throaty-voiced little wife hasn’t been seen for a couple of days. Mrs. Knight, stout Lancastrian though she be, has given up the unequal struggle and taken to her bunk. Mrs. Montgomery has also gone to earth, and her little dog has to be exercised by one of the teachers. Little Stewart—the four-year-old boy—looks peaked and pale, with dark rings under his brown eyes. Mrs. Gammans is all right, but finds the recumbent position the only tolerable one just now. None of the men is *hors de combat*, but the West Indian lawyer had to be helped this morning to his deck-chair in what is (at present euphemistically!) called the “Sun Lounge” at the rear of the ship. As for me, I have benefited by my one-day fast, and am inclined to protract it till lunch-time and perhaps for the rest of to-day.

We are, I suppose, somewhere off Finisterre, but even if we were near enough to see it, which I doubt, the rain mist would make this impossible. Visibility is limited to a hundred yards or so either side of the ship, and from time to time our foghorn brays its warning.

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The radio brings the news that the L.C.C. has decided to impose the "Closed Shop" on its employees. They don't put it this way, for there is a recognition that the "Closed Shop" may prove to contain a lot of political dynamite. They have simply repealed the existing order under which L.C.C. employees are declared to be free to join or not to join, a Trade Union. With a Labour administration at County Hall, the employees are plainly "free" to join a Union. What is repealed, in fact, is the freedom "not to join" a Trade Union. This, of course, constitutes the "closed shop," but the formula avoids the mention of the words! What humbugs we are!

That the world is in a terrible mess to-day there is no doubt, no possible doubt, no possible doubt whatever, and books and articles galore have been written to tell us why. Until now, however, nobody has put his finger on the real cause, though hypotheses have much abounded. It is the vileness of English cooking!

If it had not been for the need to disguise and to flavour the products of the English kitchen by the addition of spices and savouries of all kinds the British Empire would never have been founded. It was the search for such spices which set us, as a people, upon trading with and subsequently acquiring one-fourth of the world's surface. Had there been no British Empire, the Germans wouldn't have coveted our position in the world, and there would have been no World War I or World War II.

Nor but for the vileness of English cooking, would there have been any Bolshevik Revolution in Russia or the threat of it anywhere else! For what was it which produced the bile and indigestion in the stomach of Karl Marx, which overflowed into *Das Kapital* and the Communist Manifesto, but the vile cookery of the eating-houses of Bloomsbury which Marx used to patronize during the time he lived in London? But for the bad cooking—no dyspeptic Marx. No Marx—no Communist Manifesto, etc. No Communist Manifesto, etc.—no Communist Movement. No Communist Movement—no Russian Revolution, and no Third International. The thing is as plain as a pikestaff!

Had there been no British Empire and no Bolshevik Revolution we should not to-day be anxiously speculating on the real intentions of the Kremlin, nor find the ether rent by the boomings of Bevin nor the dark mutterings of Molotov. All, probably, would

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be well. We should be free of the White Man's Burden and the Red Man's Bogey alike!

But the appalling mess into which the world has got is too grave to be treated frivolously, and I will now deal with it with becoming seriousness.

The real architects of the modern ruin are Darwin, Marx, and Freud. The first and the last would be surprised to hear it. (The second wouldn't mind, anyway.) But it is what we do—not what we want to do, that matters, and between them this unholy trinity have just about accomplished the undoing of mankind.

Darwinism postulated the evolution of life from lower to higher forms up to and including man, by the instrumentality of Natural Selection. Life evolved from the amoeba to man, from unicellular to multi-cellular forms, not as the result of the conscious operations of the Creator, but as the result of the unconscious operation of blind natural forces. The keynote to the process was adaptation. In any given environment the life forms suited to it, or capable of adapting themselves to it, survived. Those that were not, and could not, perished. In the contest with "Nature, red in tooth and claw," the "fittest" survived. And what was the test of fitness? Kindness, courage, virtue, and the rest of the moral categories? Not at all. The test of fitness was the fact of survival. Darwinism, as Charles Fort puts it, may be defined as the survival of those who survived!

Astronomy, by Darwin's day, had destroyed the old cosmogony in which the earth was the centre of the Universe, creation a thing of a few thousand years ago, and "God was very near." It had reduced the earth to the third-rate planet of a fourth-rate sun, and had pushed God back into the dim recesses of inter-stellar spaces. Darwinism knocked Him out altogether. In the automatic and unconscious processes of evolution by natural selection there was neither purpose, design, nor moral content. Things happened that way because they happened that way. And that was all there was "to it."

Marxism is in fact Darwinism applied to the social life of man. The "Class Struggle," in which nothing is barred and "everything goes," is our old Darwinian friend—"Nature, red in tooth and claw." The evolutionary processes, blind and unconscious, which governed the development of life on the planet, governed also the evolution of human society. The "dialectical materialism"

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of Marx, in which consciousness was defined as the result of material conditions, is the blood brother, in human affairs, of the unconscious evolutionary processes of Darwinism in the development of life on the planet. Everything about man—the conditions of his life, his thought, his law, his science and his art—were all the reflection of the property-relation existing at any given time.

There was no morality in Marxism any more than in Darwinism. The test of fitness to survive was not moral worth. It was survival achieved in struggle with anything or anybody who stood in the way. The prevalent system of property-relations in Marx's day was Capitalism, under which the land and the means of life were privately owned by a small minority of the people, while the mass constituted a landless proletariat which could only live by the grace of the minority. Very well, let the majority combine to overthrow the minority. Let them use any weapon, regardless of any moral code whatever, to dispossess the minority, to socialize the land and the means of life, and to establish the "Classless State," in which Government would no longer be an instrument of oppression, but merely the administration of things, and in which each should contribute according to his ability, and each should take according to his need.

Darwin having destroyed any moral content in the evolution of life, Marxism having destroyed any morality in politics and the waging of the class-war, Freud put the coping-stone on the edifice by destroying the soul. The soul of man, it seemed, was no more than a bundle of conditioned reflexes in which the strongest propellent was a hidden urge to rape one's mother!

With God banished, morality in politics destroyed and derided, and the soul reduced to nothingness, is it any wonder that the cement has fallen out of human society? Men can only live together in human society, and nations can only live together in peace, on the basis of a commonly accepted set of premises, on an agreed conspectus with rules which all agree to accept. If this accepted set of premises be non-existent, if each nation or man is free to assert its or his own conspectus, then inevitably self-interest becomes the rule of life. As between nations this means that "they should take who have the power, and they should keep who can." In social life it means that any band of ruffians should seize power who can contrive to do it, and then hold down and exploit their fellow-men to their heart's content.

Is it any wonder that Darwinism, Marxism, and Freudism,

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between them, have produced two world wars and a series of revolutions, that Marxism should have produced the most complete and ruthless police State in history, that mankind everywhere should be less free than ever, and that hope for the future is at its lowest ebb? And that mankind should live under the shadow of the atomic bomb, and dread the Apocalypse of to-morrow?

CHAPTER 14



Religion and Politics

THERE is another way, I sometimes think, of looking at the mess into which the world has gotten itself, another reason why we are all adrift. It is that much of our modern politics consists of misapplied religion—religion which has become diverted from its proper object:

There are two things in a man's soul which haunt him all his days. One is a sense of loneliness. We are on the earth, but we are not of it. We are outcast from our home, and somehow we must find our way back to it. We go about our business or our pleasures during the day, but "we lay our heads in a foreign field whenever the day is done." *Thou hast made man for Thyself And he is restless until he find rest in thee.* So St. Augustine—great sinner, great saint—begins his autobiography. We seek always to assuage that loneliness, to escape that restlessness.

The second is the memory of a lost blessedness, of some Golden Age which has left us, some Garden from which we have been expelled. It is because beauty—in women, in art, in poetry, etc.—awakens afresh in us the memory of that lost beatitude, that it stirs the soul to tears, and makes us feel so acutely the "heartbreak at the heart of things." This blessedness which we lost somehow in the past, we must somehow regain in the future.

The blessedness which man has lost finds expression in the legends of almost every race, in the tradition of a Golden Age, back in the remote past, before the dawn of history. Our own story of the Garden of Eden is part of that Golden Age tradition.

The blessedness we seek to regain expresses itself in the hope of "Heaven," of "Nirvana," of the "Happy Hunting Grounds," and the like.

There is a third thing in the soul of man. He instinctively associates the loss of his past blessedness with some sin, some

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failing, some "fall," in himself. And he associates the hope of regaining it with the overcoming of sin within himself.

All these three things express themselves in the religions of man. The vocabulary differs, the nomenclature varies, but the content is the same. The Christian must overcome the lusts of the flesh and the things of this world "which pass away." The Buddhist must overcome "desire"—the fell attraction of the "pairs of opposites" between which unregenerate man helplessly swings. We have to be "born again," to "put on the new man" in order to attain that future bliss. And so, first and foremost, religion has concerned itself with the soul of man, and on the need for individual "redemption," individual "deliverance." In the conspectus of religion, this life on earth has been a time of probation, a period for spiritual growth, a period of cleansing, a preparation for the Hereafter, when, in "Jerusalem our Happy Home," in that state of identification with the Whole without loss of personal identity which is called "Nirvana," or in the Mahommedans' "Paradise," we shall find "rest unto our souls," and the division in the soul of man be healed for ever.

Now because this view of life was shared, by and large, by all peoples, however much the forms of their religions varied, there could be something like a common morality among men, and especially within a given religious area, such as Christendom. When Catholicism reigned throughout Europe, say, the code was common to the men of all Europe. So within the Muslim world. So within the Buddhist world. This is not to say, of course, that men and nations did not violate the code. But the code was there as a sort of yardstick for the measurement of conduct, personal and national. And when men broke it they did so with a sense of sin. And there were things common to all the religions, and therefore constituting a common code across the boundaries of particular religious creeds, however much the adherents of particular faiths hated the adherents of others. Thus, love was better than hate, kindness better than cruelty, truth better than lies and deception. There were things that "were not done." There were rights all men held because they were men, and in some sense, though outcast, still the sons of God. In Christendom the guardian of the code was a supernational authority—the Catholic Church—which could and did call to account both men and nations.

Now the effect of the last few centuries has been twofold. It

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has been to destroy the common code, and to transfer the hope of bliss from the next world to this.

The Reformation, designed to purify the Church from the abuses which stained it, had the effect, not at all designed by its first protagonists, of letting loose the Nationalism which in our day has become a frenzy, as in Hitler's Germany. Henry the Eighth in Britain, Richelieu in France, Bismarck in Germany—between them they elevated the National Sovereign State to complete independence of either secular or spiritual international control or restraint. The religion of the State came to be what suited its interests.

The destruction of the common code as between nations was paralleled by the destruction of the code as between man and man within nations. In mediaeval society rights and responsibilities went hand in hand. Wealth was mainly in land, and the ownership of land carried with it duties as well as privileges. But capitalism produced new and liquid forms of wealth, in which ownership was divorced from responsibility. Between "master" and "man" in the older society there was at least a human relationship. Between the joint stock company shareholder, with holdings in a dozen different concerns, and the workmen employed in them, there was no human relationship at all. To buy in the cheapest market and sell in the dearest—this became the universal *modus operandi*. And if the basis of the capitalist system was a vast landless proletariat, divorced from the soil and herded together in ugly and insanitary slums—well that was just too bad, but it could not, it seemed, be helped!

Moreover, the very validity of the code came to be questioned and then derided. The destruction of the old cosmogony by the astronomers, the emptying by Darwin of all moral content from the processes by which life had developed on the planet, the adoption by Marx of the amoral "class-struggle" as a means to destroying Capitalism, the work of Freud and Adler, on which I touched in the last chapter—all these eroded the very validity of the code itself.

As the code decayed, as religion died, men turned their hopes of bliss from the other world to this one. Men began to dream of Utopia on earth—the Co-operative Commonwealth, the Socialist Republic, the Classless Communist State. These, solidly planted on earth, would provide men with the home for which they craved, and restore the sense of bliss lost long ago. Into these

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conceptions men injected a religious quality, the religious quality which earlier had centred on self-improvement. Now we were to improve the State and transform Society, and that it seemed would transform men. So "the Party" took the place of "the Church," *Das Kapital* the place of the Bible, economic doctrines the place of the Creeds, and the "Party line" the place of the code. In the name and for the sake of "the Party" men would do all sorts of things which, alone, they would never think of doing. The end was the seizure of power by the Party, by any means, fair or foul. Power once in the hands of the Party, and all problems would soon solve themselves. The Russian Revolution, the Italian Revolution, and the Nazi Revolution, were the outcome.

All things were foreseen and provided for save one. It was that whether or not the "end justifies the means," it is certain that the choice of the means determines the end. States and societies consist of men and women. Train them in complete and utter amorality for the purpose of seizing power, accustom them to lies, distortions, treacheries, brutality, and the rest, and when you have got your revolution, you will most certainly not have achieved the "good republic." The ruling class which emerges from revolutions so inspired will be more ruthless, more cruel, more contemptuous of human life and suffering than the ruling class it supersedes. Moreover, the new dictatorship will be more comprehensive and more thorough than the old. For it will have learnt all the weaknesses and loopholes in the old set-up and take care that they are eradicated in the new.

Men turned their eyes from heaven to earth. And what they achieved was hell.

CHAPTER 15



Sunny Weather — Beaverbrook and Tim Healey — Sunday at Sea

IT is Sunday. And, appropriately enough, to-day we have seen the sun. This morning the sky above us was overcast. But far ahead, on the horizon, it appeared to lighten. Soon we were running under clear skies with the sun on our port bow. Steadily it has shone all day. Its effects on the spirit of the ship were magical. Everybody was up and about—including the invalids. Long chairs were hauled out of the sun lounge and dispersed on the deck facing the sun. People looked at each other with new eyes and with heightened appreciation. The captain, normally not given to excessive optimism, and much given to understatement, was positively genial. "This," said he, waving a hand to the sunlit waves, "this is what you have paid for!" The sea was moderate, but the white caps were showing, and these in the glow of the sunshine took on a new whiteness. Where the bows of the ship cut through the waves the backwash from the ship's side were lit with an exquisitely beautiful shade of pale green. The breasts and wings of the gulls wheeling behind the ship were holy in their whiteness where the sun caught them as they wheeled. A brightness came into the air, and something lifted in our breasts. And the sea was no longer black or dark grey, but a rich, deep cobalt.

Only one of our company did not respond to the sun's embrace. It was Lady Mary, the girl widow. To her it brought back the sunny days of last August when her husband was still alive, and for a little while not too ill, and when they sat in the sunshine in the garden of their cottage. Now, only the sun was here, and her Antony gone. And because, after the stress and strain of his illness and death, and the business of packing up and preparing for this journey, she now had for the first time a little leisure, the sense of loss came back with redoubled force, and she con-

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fessed to a bad attack of self-pity. Poor child! I wish I could help her. But in this life, whether it goes well or ill, each of us is and remains essentially alone. Only time, which scars over all wounds, can help her. All I can do is to let her talk, and throw in a word now and then.

We have left behind us the seagulls which started from Scotland with us and have picked up a smaller, more compact type of gull which frequents the Azores. It has wings which are dark grey on the backs, and dazzling white underneath, as is also the body. These will accompany us to the Azores and for a few days beyond. What we then pick up I've no idea. But in a few more days we shall see the flying-fish, the West Indian doctor says.

A net for deck quoits has been erected on deck, and a dart-board has been hung in the sun lounge. There is even word of putting up a canvas swimming bath. . . .

Speaking of baths and the habit of bathing, Gammans remarks that the great days of empire-building were days before we learnt to take the daily bath. It is in the days of extensive plumbing that the Empire is being thrown away. I recall that my grandmother thought that baths were "weakening," but confess that I cannot face the world of a morning till I've bathed and shaved. Gammans asks why? I reply that I don't know, but I recall that Chesterton used to say that the "saint could afford to be dirty: it was the seducer who needed to be clean." Whereon he accuses me of boasting . . . !

Talk runs on the humour of politics, and I recall the story of Lord Beaverbrook and Tim Healey. In the first World War, Beaverbrook was Minister of Propaganda. Being in the Lords, he could not answer for his Ministry in the Commons, and hearing one day that a Motion of Censure upon its administration was to be moved in the Commons he cast around for some Member of the Commons to defend him. He thought of Tim Healey and asked him telephonically to go down the following Sunday to Cherkley Court, his Surrey home. Tim replied "Oi've to go to Mass on Sunday morning, but after Mass Oi'll be with ye." Beaverbrook tells the story after this fashion:

"Tim arrived at Cherkley, and said: 'Good-day Max! Will ye be givin' me a bottle of champagne?' I gave him a bottle of champagne which he drank with evident relish. Then he said, Max, Oi'll be havin' another bottle of champagne.' I gave him

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another. But every time I tried to turn the conversation to the Motion of Censure which was to be moved on the morrow, with a view to briefing him for the defence, he brushed my attempt aside, and would only say, 'Rest aisy now, Oi'm telling ye! Rest aisy, now! O'll just be havin' another bottle of champagne.' To make a long story short night came, and Tim went upstairs to bed very mellow, and still completely unbriefed. When I rose on the Monday, I found Tim had gone off to London. I rang Bonar Law, and told him of my attempt to brief Tim, and of how Tim would only say: 'Rest aisy now!' Bonar Law said that in case anything should go wrong he'd be in the Chamber.

"The afternoon came, and the Motion of Censure was duly moved and seconded. The charges usual on such an occasion—inefficient administration, swollen staffs, extravagant expenditure, etc.—were all brought out and ventilated. Then Tim rose, and the Speaker called him. He began by saying that never in the course of a long Parliamentary experience had he heard a Motion of Censure so ill-based and ill-supported as this one. Then he went on: 'They speak of extravagance and waste of money, Mr. Speaker. But they do not say in this Chamber what they say in the Lobbies. But I will bring these things to the light of day. What do they say in the Lobbies, sir? They say that there was an item of noine pounds spent on whisky and cigars! Where was that noine pounds spent on whisky and cigars? In *Belfast*, Mr. Speaker! And on whom was that noine pounds spent on whisky and cigars, Mr. Speaker? On whom but that traitor to Oireland, that lickspittle of the English, that arch-enemy of the whole Oirish people—*Carson*! And he went on to belabour Carson with all his strength . . .

"When he sat down, a dozen Ulster members rose to repel this attack on their leader, and twenty Southern Irish to continue and expand it. For the rest of the day the battle between the Northern and Southern Irish continued, and the Motion of Censure and all my sins of commission and omission were forgotten!

"That night, about midnight, the bell rang at my London home. I opened the door and there was Tim. He said: 'Good-evening Max. I'll be having a steak, and a bottle of champagne!' I arranged both for him with right goodwill, for I had, of course, heard what had happened in the Commons. As he sat eating his steak and drinking his bottle, I tried to thank him. But he waved my thanks aside. 'What did Oi tell ye?' he demanded. 'Did Oi not

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tell ye to rest aisy? Oi'll just be having another bottle of champagne!' ”

Alas, the Irish Party has gone from Westminster, and Parliamentary life is the poorer for their passing.

Although it is a Sunday, we have no service to-day. There is no musical instrument to play hymn tunes, and our company is so small that most of us would probably feel self-conscious. Mrs. Blagrove, who is just retiring from her war-time post as superintendent in the W.R.N.S. regrets this. She says that while she does not like compulsory church parades, she always urged her Wrens to attend church parade. She felt that those who missed contact with the Bible and the Prayer Book missed something beautiful and elevating. I must say I agree with her. When I was a child I was for some years a choirboy. This had three advantages—one, social, two, economic, and, three, personal. Twice a day on Sunday and one evening a week on a Thursday I was kept out of mischief—to the great advantage of our neighbours and the local police force. I received a half-penny per practice and one penny per Sunday service—three-halfpence per week or one and six per quarter—a not inconsiderable contribution to my economic well-being. And though when I first attended, the services meant little or nothing to me, gradually, over the years, one's ears became attuned to the matchless beauty of Biblical prose and to the high moral quality of the Collects. And I acquired, by heart, the largest stock of hymns (Church of England) of probably anybody in my generation! Later I supplemented these with a corresponding stock from the Wesleyan Hymnal.

If anyone wishes to learn to write or speak he could find no better model than the Bible—the King James's Bible, I mean, and an early training in the hymnals is not a bad foundation for a life-long love of poetry.

It is, I think, a great pity that the rising generation has missed, or largely missed, that background. There is no richer storehouse of parable and allegory than the Bible; but even in the Commons the point of many Biblical allusions is lost on many Members, and it would be only a small minority, I fear, which knew its Bible really well. About Shakespeare I take a different view. I would not have him thrust compulsorily on the children. He was so thrust on me as a child, and as the result I conceived an aversion to him which for many many years kept me from his

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golden treasury of beauty. But the difference between the Bible and Shakespeare is that while Shakespeare is profound and complex, the Bible is profound and simple. And simplicity is the essence of good speaking and good writing. As an adolescent I revelled in the magnificent periods of Macaulay. Ever since then I have been trying to achieve simplicity. Some day perhaps I shall. Meantime I assert that the first commandment for writers and speakers is: "Thou shalt be clear!" When clarity has been achieved, all things else may be added unto you. Beauty should be the incidental by-product of clarity, a thing I wish our younger poets, who seem to me to put a premium on incoherence, would remember. Otherwise they will go on muttering to themselves—and quite right, too!

CHAPTER 16



Modern Workmanship and Old Crafts — The Heresy of Change — The State

THERE is always a dream-like quality about life, so that from time to time one asks, with the Eastern mystic: "Am I a dreamer dreaming the Universe, or is the Universe dreaming me?" Sometimes I even suspect that dream and dreamer are one and that neither are! On board ship, this dreamlike quality of life is emphasized. The steady rise and fall of the ship is a kind of lullaby; the warmer air as we make to the south relaxes tense brains and eases tense muscles: the regular routine of life relieves one of the need for decision. A large and restful acquiescence is the dominating mood. Mostly one just ponders.

Personally I ponder much on the heresies of these days, to which I plead guilty to having contributed, in my salad days, more than my share. Among them the heresy that all change is for the better. A dark, deep, heresy this.

Thus, two of the lounge chairs have given way. They are new this voyage and they look remarkably well. But though none of us is a Fatty Arbuckle and though, being chained to the floor, these chairs have not been flung about by rough weather, the leg of one, and the cross-piece of another, are broken. Shoddy workmanship this! In the days of the mediaeval Guilds these chairs would not have been allowed to go out in this weak condition. For the Guild not only regulated wages, but they insisted on standards of quality in production. Even when the Guilds had gone, the system of apprenticeship long survived them. The skilled craftsman trained the growing lad. And it was a training not only in craft skills, but in character, too. Upon that training rested the world-wide acceptance of the fact that the workmanship in British goods was the finest in the world. To-day—while the apprenticeship system still survives—the machine has largely taken the place of the old craftsman. These chair legs were

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probably "turned" by machinery in one factory, and "assembled" or stuck together, very inadequately as it appears, in another.

But it is not merely that the machine has largely taken the place of the craftsman, so that the joy of creating something has been destroyed and replaced by the inferior satisfaction of assembling something. The spirit of the workmen has changed, too. The spirit of Trade Unionism in its beginnings was a noble spirit—though in the conditions of those days it was bound to be the spirit of protest. So, too, was the spirit of the Socialist movement in its early days. Utopian it may have been, impracticable it often was—ignoble, mean, and selfish it certainly was not. But the years have changed that—and this change, too, has not been for the better. The continuous assertion of "rights," very proper in itself, has not been accompanied by any such continuous assertion of "duties." We tolerate to-day slack and scamped workmanship which would have horrified the workmen of my father's generation. He was a plumber. I remember the rebuke he administered to me as a boy over some piece of slack work which I had blamed on the tools. "It's a bad workman, Willie, who blames his tools!" said he, and there was the scorn of the craftsman in his voice.

This heresy that all change is for the better is linked with another—the idea that if anything's wrong, everything's wrong. Thus, in the inter-war years there was much unemployment in Britain. And we did very little about it, either because we did not care, or because we didn't know what to do. But even in those years our social system provided work and wages for eight or nine out of every ten of us. For the eight or nine, the inter-war years, in this respect, were good years. In all sorts of ways most of us could wish that we were back in those years! Now the natural and sensible reaction to the failure of our pre-war society to provide for the ninth and tenth man would be to ask: "How can we provide for them?" We did not know then. But we do know now. We can, within pretty wide limits, regulate the volume of employment and, within fairly narrow limits, eliminate unemployment. But what we are doing is to embark upon the attempt—in spite of the experience of Russia—to change the whole set-up. We propose to throw the baby out with the bath water.

This is quite contrary to the native genius of the British—which is the genius of the empirical approach. Whenever we

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subordinate the empirical approach to the ideological one we go astray. Not permanently or finally, for even in postulating the theory, we've half an idea that it really isn't as simple as all that. And if the steed of theory starts running away, our tendency is to dismount before the animal has run too far. But it is a pity that instead of reacting violently from Right to Left and later on from Left to Right, we don't recall that the shortest difference between two points is a straight line, and keep to the middle of the road.

There is a third heresy which is bound up with the other two. It is the worship of the State. Confronted with the sins of Capitalism we have created an abstraction upon which we have mentally conferred the powers of Godhead. If anything is wrong "the State" will put it right. The State will provide pensions, the State will prevent exploitation, the State will run industry. And so on. It reminds me a little of that satirical verse heard during the first World War:

"God heard the embattled Nations sing and shout
'God bless the Kaiser and God save the King,'
'God this, God that and God the other thing,'
'Good God!' said God, 'I've got my work cut out!'"

Substitute "the State" for God, and the argument holds. It's got its work cut out. For the thing we forget in adoring and praying to this abstraction the State, is that the State is you and me and the next door neighbour, and all the rest of us. And if we all function at half-speed and curse at our grievances while we appeal to "the State," it is a pretty poor life we shall get out of the State.

For a time, indeed, the State can seem to fill the bill. It can confer benefit by improving unemployment pay, sick pay, workmen's compensation, old age pensions, etc. It can raise the school-leaving age, and provide for the feeding of school children and the like. All these things are good in themselves. But unless they are accompanied by such a degree of production as will prevent inflation, ere long the new rates of benefit will buy no more than the old.

Again, for a time the State can pay Paul by robbing Peter. The Liberal Party financed many of its reforms by "robbing the henroosts" of the rich. To-day there are in the old sense of the word no rich men left. A few survive by living on capital, but no one can make a really big income to-day. To make a net income

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of £5,000 a year, an annual gross income of £65,000 is necessary. More than £5,000 you cannot, for practical purposes, make. The Labour Party may for a time finance its reforms by robbing the middle class. But not for long. And when that source is dried up, and all the population has been proletarianized, then it is the proletariat which will have to sustain, feed, clothe, and house the proletariat. And if the proletariat doesn't work, or works only at 60 per cent level of capacity, it will not be fed, clothed, housed, etc.—or fed, clothed, housed, and what not, only at 60 per cent levels. The “roseate hues of early dawn,” their golden store spent, “will pass away.” And “the shadows of departing day creep on once more.”

But that's enough of heresy for this morning. For outside the lounge in which I contemplate the ruined chairs, the sun is shining, the warm breeze is blowing, and the morning is “like dawn in Paradise.” My own output to-day is likely to be no more than 50 per cent of capacity. I've got that Monday morning feeling!

CHAPTER 17



The Supersession of Man — Reaching the Azores

WHEN one is living in a period of social change it is difficult to realize its full import. It is only when one looks backwards over the years that one realizes how far and how fast the change has gone. Take, for example, the change which has come about, in the last few decades, in the position of man.

At one time man had four well-defined functions. He was the progenitor of his young, the provider for his young, the trainer of his young. And he did the work of the world.

To-day the third of those functions has practically disappeared. It has been taken over by the State. From the age of five the State takes over the training of the child and submits it until the age of sixteen or later, to that process of training in social conformity which is dignified, but not modified, by the title of "education." Man as trainer of his young has been practically superseded.

As provider for his young he has been not wholly replaced by the State, but certainly replaced to some degree. The State pays a grant at birth for each child. It provides pre-natal and post-natal clinical treatment for it. It pays a weekly "Children's Allowance" for all children except the first. It provides milk and meals at school for a large proportion of children, and is contemplating providing it for all. As provider, man is not out, but he is on the way out.

As worker, man's position has been deeply eroded by (a) machines and (b) women. The machine has over very wide areas, either superseded man or reduced him to the position of machine-minder. Assuming that we are not all blown to smithereens by the atomic bomb, atomic energy will be applied as a vast new source of power, before very long. At present we can only use uranium for purposes of nuclear fission, and it is expensive to produce atomic power. Ere long, I do not doubt that

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we shall find many substances from which atomic energy can be released; and that the process of so doing will become cheaper and cheaper. Coal and oil, with all the millions of men they employ, will become superfluous.

Women have invaded, wholesale, fields at one time reserved for men. When I joined the Civil Service in 1910, women were employed in only two or three departments, and there only in strict segregation from the men. In the Savings Bank they were kept in a separate wing with a guard over the door which separated this wing from the rest of the building. It is recorded that on one occasion the secretary to the Post Office, engaged in inspecting the Savings Bank, was unceremoniously hauled back by the collar, by the attendant, when he sought to pass through the door to the woman's wing. It was assumed that he was up to no good! To-day men and women are employed side by side on the same work in every department of State. And this change in the Civil Service is paralleled in dozens of other industries and occupations.

Nor is man's position as progenitor any longer safe. For artificial insemination, first applied to the breeding of cattle, has now been extended to the human race. In America, the number of test-tube babies grows larger every year. Having imported from the U.S.A. jazz, swing, chewing-gum, American slang, and other horrors, I see no reason to suppose that the British will long be spared this new importation. Indeed, in the world of open markets to which we are pledged by the Bretton Woods Agreement, American parentage may be thrust on future generations of English babies as part of the American export drive, and having agreed to abolish Imperial Preference we shall not be allowed to prefer Dominion or Colonial fathers!

What future, then, is there for mere man? Some, doubtless will be preserved for those hard, unpleasant, manual jobs which it does not pay to mechanize. Some may be preserved, under conditions of strict control, for decorative purposes. A limited number will be kept to save the women the boredom of pressing the buttons of the machines by which the work of the world will be done. A few extremely highly selected specimens will be reserved for stud purposes. These will be the unhappiest of the lot, for they will have all the duty of procreation with none of the pleasures of copulation. The rest—the vast mass—will become completely superfluous and will be killed off, probably by atomic

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bombs, which can dispose of a hundred thousand men at a time as easily as Hitler's gas chambers disposed of a dozen.

My own prospective fate is clear. I am fifty. I am plain. I'm no good whatever at machinery. It is time I made my peace with God. . . .

At 2.30 to-day—Monday—we reached the Azores. Of this group of islands we saw two. The first was quite small, obviously volcanic in origin. It was a fine day, but this island, rising steeply out of the water, was covered by a layer of thick cloud, which almost gave the impression that the volcano was still active. Flores—the island of flowers—is much larger. This, too, rises steeply from the sea, but once risen it displays country which undulates erratically and irregularly. Pretty well all the land visible from the ship was divided up into small fields by walls made of pieces of rock, like the walls of the fields in Derbyshire. The land seemed to be intensively cultivated, all sorts of little ledges of soil on the rocky slopes down to the sea being plainly under crop. The island grew, we were told, potatoes—of which they get four crops a year—bananas and flowers. The coast line, along which we ran for some time, was dotted with little villages rising up from sea level, in which the village churches stood out prominently. The Azores, of which the population is a quarter of a million, are Portuguese, and of course Catholic.

The island left behind, the wind changed, from south-west to north. The air became colder and we ceased to bask in the sun. But the wind is now a following wind, which will speed us on our way. We are having the usual daily "sweep" on the mileage of each day's run, which I am uniformly unsuccessful in winning.

CHAPTER 18



Incentives to Production in Industry — The Future

I CANNOT help reflecting that it is a fool's paradise in which we are living in England to-day. "A fool's garden," said Neil Lyons—"is a wilderness of wisdom."

We've got the wisdom all right. Never was there so literate, not to say literary, a House of Commons as ours is to-day. Professors of economics abound in profusion. And whether we be professors or not, we've read the books. But it is astonishing how the educated can miss the obvious. That is what we are doing to-day. Within a couple of years we shall run up against the consequences, and they will be unpleasant ones. Take, for example, the question of incentives in industry.

What should be the working population—I don't merely mean working-class population—can be divided into four parts. Those who have ceased to work: those who work for a day or two a week: those who work five or six days a week but work at half-steam: and those who, from force of habit or grace of character, still do whatever their hands find to do with all their might. Let us have a look at each category.

There are in England to-day—apart from old age pensioners and others living on pensions or annuities—quite a large number of people who have given up the unequal struggle with the bureaucracy on the one hand and the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the other. The first, with its regulations, inhibitions, and restrictions makes it impossible for them to make any money. The second takes it away from them if, against all odds, they succeed in doing so. So they are "living on capital." By living on capital they escape Income Tax. Suppose that a man has £10,000, which at five per cent would bring him in £500 a year. That £500 will be subject to tax, which will reduce it to somewhere about £350. But if the man decides to "live on capital" he may have £500 a year for twenty years and pay not a penny of

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tax, for that £10,000 is the residue of his taxed earnings in the past. And since Death Duties will swallow up most of that £10,000 if he still possesses it at death, he would be foolish not to spend it before he dies. So he ceases to work, ceases to invest, and lives on capital.

The second category consists of men who by working all the week could earn a high income. But there is no point in earning a high income if the Chancellor takes most of it away. So such men work out the proportion of the week during which if they went on working they would in effect be working not for themselves but for the Chancellor, and at that point they stop.

The third category consists of those who attend for a full week but work at half-steam while they are at work. This category is a very large one. It has been ruined by two things. The first is the long-impregnated habit, engendered by years of propaganda, of giving as little as possible in return for as much as they can get. The second thing is the system of "on cost" contracts prevalent for so many years during the war. Under "on cost" contracts the employer did not care how little workmen worked or how much pay they got. In fact the more the better. For the State paid the "on cost" percentage on it all. Old propaganda and old habit alike die hard.

The fourth category consists of those who feel it is due to their own self respect to do a good day's work. This category is relatively small, and its members are regarded by the other categories as "mutts." They make no more than the slackers. But they preserve their souls in dignity.

Now all these facts are perfectly well known and are privately admitted by members of the Government. Publicly they will not admit them, for if they did, they would have to act on the logic of them. This would mean going back on many statements and policies of the past, and would bring them into conflict with a large section of their followers.

Thus, it has long been a Labour slogan that direct taxation hits the well-to-do, while indirect taxation hits the poor. Therefore they have favoured direct taxation. It is difficult now for them to admit that too heavy taxation does not merely hit the well-to-do but by diminishing social incentive, hits the whole community by stopping or diminishing the efforts of categories number one and number two respectively.

As regards category number three—that large category which is

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functioning at somewhere around sixty per cent of capacity, a Labour Government which rests upon the financial support of the Trade Unions must, like Agag, tread delicately in attacking the restrictive practices of the Trade Unions. It will exhort generally, but it will not attack specifically. Over this large area the two main incentives to hard work—fear and hope—the fear of unemployment and the hope of reward by piece-work, do not operate. The fear of unemployment is exorcised by the shortage of man-power and the Government's promise of full employment. Piece-work is discouraged by Trade Union practice. And overtime by the Chancellor, who takes about half what is earned.

Now, while industry functions at about sixty per cent of its possible level, the cost of the social services is being increased stupendously. This we could well afford if Britain were working. But with Britain half idle it spells bankruptcy or inflation, which is a device for taking away with one hand the benefit which is given with the other. There is a certain time lag between the giving and the inflation which represents the taking away. But the end is sure!

Now this would be true if Britain were an autarchy—a self-sufficient, self-contained social system which contained within its own borders all that it needed for its own economic life. But it doesn't. It depends largely upon its export trade, for the raw materials for its industry and for the difference between the food it needs and the food it produces. Just now there is such a shortage of consumer goods in the world that price doesn't matter. But when the great U.S.A. industrial machine is in full peace-time production, when the German and the Japanese machines are back in action, price will matter enormously. British goods will have to compete in quality and cost, with the products of other systems in the world market. When we have to face the buyers' market of to-morrow we shall have to do one of two things—either reduce wages very steeply, or step up output equally steeply.

Whether we nationalize industries or not, whether we have a Government of the Right or Left, or a Coalition resting on both, this inescapable alternative will confront us. It is one of those facts of which Burns said that they were "chiefs that winna' ding!"

For the time being this alternative is obscured from us by the American loan which makes good temporarily the gap between what we are producing and what we need to produce to remain

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solvent, and to meet the cost of the various national services. But that Loan is melting rapidly. We may make do for a bit further by paying the stockholders in the concerns we nationalize less than their holdings are worth. This is robbery, of course, but it may be argued that we can't be too squeamish. But neither expedient will serve us for long. When they cease to serve us we shall be up against it.

What then is necessary? It is necessary to restore incentives to work. Not equality, but production, is the great need. And equality nullifies the incentive to production. Why should a workman spend years as an apprentice in order to become a skilled artisan when the difference between the skilled and unskilled rate of pay has been narrowed to a penny or so an hour? Why should a man work harder than the next when, whatever their output, each will get the same Trade Union rate of pay? Why should parents spend large sums to educate their children only to find that the educated man commands no more than the uneducated? Why should a man work long hours all the week when the State collars the fruit of five out of six days' labour? Why should a man expand his business and increase his business worries and cares when his income after doing so is no bigger than it was before? Why should a man who has saved enough to live on continue to work when the upshot is that only the Exchequer benefits? It is useless to say that men ought to do all these things, and that they are anti-social if they don't. Politics is the science of the possible. Human nature being what it is, they won't.

This is one respect in which we should learn from the Russians. After the Revolution the Bolsheviks deliberately set out to create an equalitarian society. They sought as a matter of deliberate policy steadily to narrow the gap between different categories of remuneration. When I was in Russia in 1927 they produced to me with great pride, masses of figures showing how far the process of flattening the wages "concertina" had gone.

Production fell and fell. They tried everything to improve it. They instituted "Stakhanovism." They fostered "Socialist Shock competition." Neither solved the problem. They tried punishment and terror. The only result of this was that executives became afraid to take decisions at all. If the decision turned out wrong they were liable to be accused of sabotage. So the great thing to do was to do nothing without a signature from above, behind which a man might shelter if the decision turned out wrong.

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"Passed to you, please," became the standard endorsement on the files!

Nothing succeeded. Finally the Russians, pledged to equalitarianism and the "class-less state," were compelled deliberately to reverse engines and to encourage disparity of reward. In pay and in privileges the gaps were widened and widened. To-day they are much wider than in Capitalist America—the Russians do nothing by halves. The gap between colonel and private in the Russian army, the gap between the workman and foreman, and foreman and manager in industry, the gap between "intellectual" and "manual worker" is wider than anywhere in the world. To-day Russia boasts of its "proletarian millionaires."

That *did* work.

Now for a Labour Government in England the process of reversing engines is going to be a difficult one. If you have proclaimed for decades that the cause of the poverty of the poor is the rapacity of the capitalist, it is not easy to tell the workers that the capitalist having been taxed out of activity and the middle-class having been proletarianized by two wars and excessive taxation, the poverty of the poor can only be overcome if the poor do more work. It is not easy to break down the similarity of rewards resulting from decades of Trade Union activity, where you depend on the Trade Unions for your Party finance. It will not be easy to reverse engines on taxation. And even if the leaders of the Labour Party come to recognize the truth of what is here written, they will find it extremely difficult to carry with them the rank and file of the Parliamentary Labour Party in Parliament or the rank and file of the Party in the country.

I conclude, therefore, that the Government will be incapable on its own, of resolving the crisis which impends. If so, it will seek a new Coalition, but after their experience of the way in which the last one was broken up, the Tories probably won't play. So an election will probably be the only way out.

CHAPTER 19



The Nature of Women

THE last chapter was rather heavy going, so in this one we will consider something light, entertaining, and easy to understand, such as the nature of women.

Now the first thing to do, if one is to get a correct view of the nature of women, is to dismiss all this modern nonsense about equality as between men and women. In some respects they are similar. Each bears his or her own incommunicable burden. Each shares the nostalgia and the pain, the wonder and the awe of life. Each is enclosed in his or her own mystery. Each feels strange promptings from that other world which envelops and interpenetrates this visible and tangible world of ours. To each there comes, in the silence of the desert and the thunders of Sinai, the voice of God. Each hears the whispered intimation of immortality. But they are not *equal*.

We have recently had a Royal Commission on the subject of Equal Pay between Men and Women. It sat for two years. It produced the woolliest and vaguest Report of any Royal Commission in modern times. I defy anyone to discover what either the Majority or the Minority Report really means. I'm not surprised at that, for the subject made it inevitable. Thus a woman worker is at a disadvantage as compared with a male worker if she has to stand for long periods of time. Seat the pair of them at the same job, and half the disadvantage at once disappears. There are some jobs at which men and women are as near equal as makes no matter. Thus, in the "Common Classes", of the Civil Service women enter through the same examination, at the same age, and with the same health and character tests, as the men. Thereafter they sit side by side and do exactly the same work as the men. The only noticeable difference between them as workers is a slightly higher incidence of "casual" sick leave on the women's side than on the men's. There are other jobs—

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especially routine and repetitive operations, such as the operating of calculating machines, where the women seem to be better than the men, being less impatient and eager for change. But you cannot generalize. It all depends on the nature of the job. You may say that women are better adapted, as well adapted or less well adapted to a particular job than men. But that doesn't make them "equal."

Nor does the circumstance that in certain respects women are given equal rights with men—such as the right to vote or the right to hold property. Dogs and cats have an equal "right" to the protection of the R.S.P.C.A. but that doesn't make the dog the "equal" of the cat. Anyone who has seen a fight between a dog and a cat can be under no illusions about any equality between them. Similarly, as Shaw has observed, "no man is a match for any woman, not even with a poker and hob-nailed boots." If he cannot use the poker and the hob-nailed boots, they are of no advantage to him. If he does, he immediately feels himself an unutterable cad, and in a swift agony of shame and remorse promptly surrenders the point about which the fight started. In either event the woman wins!

The truth is that like the plum and the apple in jam, eggs and bacon, fish and chips, steak and onions, whisky and soda, and many other things which are not to be thought of alone, but only in association with their predestined "mates," so to speak, men and women are not equal. They are complementary to each other. Less frequently they are complimentary to each other!

A woman is dominated or affected in every relationship of life and every activity in life, by her biological function. Every woman is either a potential, a present, or a past, mother. That function of motherhood conforms her body and shapes her soul. Those soft rounded breasts whose curves set men's blood a-leaping and their hands an-itching were not devised for your delight—O sinful man! Her softness and gentleness, her patience, her capacity for enduring suffering and pain were given her for the sake of the child she will or should bear. You, O man, are merely the residuary legatee of your own baby!

This factor, this function of potential or actual motherhood, determines her attitude to life. Thus women are supposed to be less sinful than men. It is not true. It is not that they are less sinful but that they are, by Nature's decree, more responsible.

It is this function which determines, in the main and largely

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unconsciously, woman's selection of a mate. Usually a man is concerned only with selecting a wife. But a woman not only selects a husband. She selects also a father for her children. A man is much more susceptible to the beauty of a woman, than a woman is susceptible to the handsomeness of a man. Not that she despises masculine good looks. But she is looking for other qualities as well, qualities which will later have a big bearing on the security and safety of the child she is to bring forth. That is the only reason why plain fellows like me ever have a chance at all! We are selected, not for our beauty, but for our utility!

It is this motherhood factor which enforces, not merely by the will of man, but in the nature of things, that "double standard" of morality of which the logicians—simple fellows!—and the born spinster, complain. Unregenerate man seeks the gratification of one instinct—that of sex. The woman seeks the gratification of two—sex and motherhood. The first might impel her into the same indiscretions as man. The second largely restrains her—for what she needs for motherhood is not excitement, but security. If you want to win a woman do not offer her your heart. Offer her a home!

It is this same motherhood factor which accounts for the fact that it is only rarely that women attain the front rank in either the arts or the sciences—though there are notable exceptions. Neither in literature, music, painting or the sciences have the women produced giants to compare with the men. These things are the product of the head and the heart. A woman's life centre is neither. It is the diaphragm. The one big exception to this general "inferiority" of women—or rather this difference between men and women—is in respect of the stage. There the women have produced figures as striking as the men have done. I do not understand why this is so, except that much of a mother's life is fantasy life, and that the life of the stage is fantasy too.

It is the motherhood function of women which makes them treat men as children. This is often infuriating to men, but it is an extremely good dispensation of Providence. Only the feeling that the man is a "child of larger"—and not much larger—"growth" could make a woman tend a man, cook for him, wash his things, "make do and mend" for him, and discharge all those functions which he is quite incapable of discharging for himself. I myself am the most helpless of mortals. But for this dispensation of Providence, which makes women leap to relieve me of em-

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barrassments which, left to myself, I could not sustain, I should long since have given up the ghost. As it is, I do nothing which it is any trouble for me to do, plaintively make known my lack, and sit back in the serene knowledge that one of my female friends is sure to offer to do it for me!

To the woman man is, of course, a means to an end. He is the person she selects to provide the nest in which she will rear her young. When he has done this she relegates him to the circumference of her consciousness. She is willing to see to his food, his washing and the rest, but when the children arrive he is for practical purposes no more than part of the background against which she will rear her young. Anything which disturbs that background will excite her fury. That is why married women are so furiously against "the other woman," whose pernicious activities may disrupt the nest.

To the man the woman is also a background. He has a job to do in life. The condition of doing it is that he should be free to go out into the world, and that somebody else should relieve him of the mechanics of running the house. Woman is the creature to whom man comes home. If she is wise she will accept this position. For no man who has anything to do of any importance in the world, if compelled to choose between his work and his woman, would hesitate a moment to sacrifice the woman. If each is content to be the background to the other—he the economic and protecting background to her life, and she the social and domestic background to his—they may make do very well. They may even—though the odds are heavily against this—remain in love with each other for quite a time! Until indeed they become a habit to each other. At this point the marriage, provided they are not too incompatible, becomes practically safe. For of all things—nothing is stronger than the force of habit.

Since there are more women than men, many women cannot secure a mate or rear a family. The solution of official polygamy practised in non-Christian countries is impossible in Britain, for Christianity has not really made up its mind whether sex is a sacrament or a sin, though a good deal of unofficial polygamy is practised. So many women are driven to "substitute" occupations in place of motherhood—nursing, teaching, cooking, running institutions and the like. It is in these "substitute" occupations that they do best, though any career is at best a poor substitute

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for a woman's fundamental job of motherhood, as most women so engaged will privately—but not publicly—admit.

It seems to be a law of the universe that all forms of life need constant stimulus and indeed irritation.

Great fleas have little fleas
Upon their backs to bite 'em;
And little fleas have lesser fleas
And so *ad infinitum*.

Perpetual conflict and peace breed sloth and degeneration. It is the function of women in relation to men—and vice versa—to supply the stimulus and irritation and so to prevent the sloth and degeneration. Thus it is not wholly a misfortune to have a nagging wife. Much of the mental activity of Socrates was doubtless stimulated by Xantippe, his scold of a wife. Lincoln found his first forum in public affairs on the steps of the porch outside his house, to which he was driven to escape from his little packet of domestic dynamite. Once indeed he was driven to rebellion. He chased the partner of his bosom down the street, caught her, and publicly spanked her—doubtless to the secret joy and gratification of half the men in the little town, who found in the incident a vicarious atonement for all the pinpricks inflicted on them by their own wives. But for the purposeful and forceful thrusting of his wife, it is certain that the large, easy-going and amiable Lincoln would never have become President of the United States.

For this reason, rows between husband and wife should never be discouraged. One of the functions of each is to be a lightning conductor to the other! In working-class circles this is well understood, and any man who, out of mistaken sense of chivalry, butts into a row between man and wife will be promptly assaulted by both parties. And quite right too! The processes of domestic catharsis should not be interfered with from outside!

No pity should ever be wasted upon women because of their allegedly inferior status. They bear the cross of nominal inferiority in order that they may win the crown of *de facto* sovereignty. You have only to see the boastful and vain-glorious he-man of the saloon bar, after an "evening with the boys," trying to pull himself together as he approaches his home, you have only to watch how the pouter-like chest sinks in, and the shoulders droop, you have only to notice how silence falls upon him and a

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hang-dog expression steals over his face, to know who is the boss—him or his wife! Do we not know—we “old-uns”? Do we not know?

In all dealings with women it is best to yield at once with good grace. They're bound to win anyway; and if you struggle you get neither the advantage of victory nor the moral advantage of immediate surrender. Fight her, and she will not only win, but even when she has won, and taken the spoils of victory, she will still make you feel what a cad you are! In this relationship above all, you should “agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with her.”

CHAPTER 20



Life Aboard Ship — Controls — Black Market — Corruption

IT is Wednesday—ten days since we left Belfast, and a week since the effective beginning of the voyage. We are going fast, with a following wind on the starboard beam, under leaden skies. But the air is mild, and I can write in the "sun lounge," of which the sliding door is kept permanently open. We have had only one day of sunshine so far, and no calm seas. Last night was especially rough and some of our patients, who had recovered, are down again. The non-Europeans have fared worst. The Trinidad lawyer and Mrs. Pang, the Chinese lady, have been continuously under the weather. And the West Indian doctor, after nursing these and others most nobly for some days, himself went down with a bad throat, though he's about again now. One of the three teachers, Miss Parnell, Scotch and very gentle, has constituted herself the mother of the ship, and has been indefatigable in *comforting and looking after the weaker brethren and sisters*.

A mild gambling craze has descended upon the saloon, and we sit sometimes for a couple of hours playing *Vingt-et-Un* for small stakes, without very much increasing or diminishing our capital resources. The wireless is in very bad shape, and switches from station to station as the ship rolls or pitches, in a way which is infuriating. I have solved the problem of getting some washing done, so that I don't arrive in Jamaica with bags containing nothing but dirty linen. The Captain, very quiet and reserved at first, has mellowed a good deal, and now discloses a friendly disposition and a droll sense of humour. Our table is now in a permanent ripple of laughter at meal times, for he and Gammans have a fund of stories, and my repertoire isn't so bad either! It's a pleasant, friendly ship, with no misfits in our little company of passengers. If there were things would be difficult, for we are bound to live almost permanently in each other's company.

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We pool the snippets of news we pick up at odd hours on the radio, and make some sort of picture of what is going on in the world. This morning's bag is depressing. The bacon ration has been cut and bread may be cut. Mr. Shinwell's promise that electricity would not be rationed is being kept. It isn't being rationed. It's just being cut off altogether when supplies run low. Whiskey, already short, is to be shorter still next year, with only nine bottles for each ten now available. Nehru is announcing, before settlement is reached on India, an Indian hegemony in South-East Asia. Stassen—extremely able and a good type of man—announces that he will run for the Republican nomination for the American Presidency next time. The Transport Nationalization Bill is having its Second Reading Debate in the Commons. Mr. Barnes, Minister of Transport, asks for five years to show what he can do under the Bill. Hitler, as I recollect, asked only for four! . . .

The shadow of approaching extinction descends on the 300,000 little men of road transport.

I reflect that in all the arguments since the end of the war on the issue of "controls"—whether they should be maintained or relaxed—there is one consideration which does not seem to have been taken into account. And that is the appalling effect on the standards of honesty of the British people, of the present situation in Britain, producers, distributors, and consumers alike. We're all in it, from Cabinet Ministers downwards. If you want a flat you can get one without waiting your turn in the queue. One way is to give the commissionaire in a block of flats £5 down and promise him another £25 when you get a flat. You'll get it. If you're a Cabinet Minister you get an introduction to the chairman of a big property trust. He will "fix you up." After all he is only doing what each of us is doing in greater or less degree on some amenity or commodity or other. As Winston said when after he had become Prime Minister he was urged to "spill the beans": *No! No! There's too many in it!* To-day, we're all in it.

The theory is that if things are in short supply, each of us should have his or her proper share, that each of us should take his turn in the queue. It is impossible to dispute the abstract justice of this. But the practical results upon our general standards of honesty are appalling. For every control creates its own black

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market, its own carefully thought-out-wangle to evade the control. Thus Mr. Bevan controls the prices of house building. So a large proportion of the building trade takes to repairing houses instead of building them. Mr. Bevan restricts licences for repairs, so the builders do the repairs without licence. Or they get a licence for a small amount and do a large amount. We increase the number of inspectors and encourage members of the public—very much *à la* Hitler—to spy and inform on each other. Soon we shall need to have each citizen watched by one other citizen—half the population becoming unpaid policemen. But this won't stop it, either. For even the unofficial "copper" must sleep.

As with the building industry so with everything else. We ration milk, but provide extra amounts for invalids on production of a medical certificate. The number of certificates leaps up. For people with money will pay for a certificate and doctors are only human. They are not dishonest. They are merely accommodating. On the doorstep you can always get extra milk. Slip the milkman a ten-shilling note, and you will be surprised how much extra milk you can get, especially if your house is near the end of his round. For some at least of his customers will, any day of the week, be away, and he makes a good thing out of the rations they don't take.

We ration petrol, and immediately a number of devices are invented for circumventing the scheme. Coupons are sold or one month's "swopped" for another's. Petrol offices are raided for supplies of coupons. The printing presses are invoked to produce forged ones. Anybody with money can get all the petrol he wants.

We ration clothes. But if you want a couple of suits it's quite simple to get them. There is the usual swopping, buying, and selling of coupons already noted in petrol. But you really need no coupons at all if you have money. You get your tailor to take your measurements, and post them to a tailor in Belgium. He will make you a couple of suits out of good English cloth withheld from the home market. A few weeks later you slip over to Belgium and come back with the suits.

We ration eggs to one a fortnight or one a month. But if you know a farmer you can always get a dozen or two. How come? Well, the ration of poultry food issued to poultry-keepers is based on the number of hens they had in 1939. And the quota of eggs

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they are expected to deliver is computed broadly on this basis. But many have vastly expanded their flocks of hens in the years between. The eggs from this expansion are not delivered to the State collecting organization. They go into the black market, where you can buy them at any time.

The bribery of shop assistants has reached a colossal scale. If you have the money you can get—at a price and by suitably “squaring” the shop assistants—pretty well everything you want. In all sorts of things not officially rationed—like wines and spirits, etc.—an “unofficial” rationing scheme has been instituted. You can get into that scheme, provided you are willing to pay.

Any shortage, though it be quite an inevitable one, will evoke its own black market. But where the shortage is not deemed to be inevitable—where, that is to say, the control is regarded as an arbitrary one—another element comes in. Law which carries popular sanction with it is liable to be evaded. Where it doesn't it will be a point of punctilio with many people to beat the law. The classic case of this was Prohibition in the U.S.A. Much of the drunkenness amongst young people in the States can be traced directly to the days of Prohibition, when it was a point of honour almost for every adolescent to carry his own hip-flask in defiance of the law.

How many people in Britain are engaged full-time or part time in devising and operating schemes to defeat the controls is beyond computation. It is more easy to compute the numbers engaged in trying to prevent the evasion of the controls. Scores of thousands of staff, in petrol offices, in Ministry of Food offices, in the Ministry of Health, in the Ministry of Works, and numerous other departments, to say nothing of the police and the staffs of local government authorities, are either operating the controls or trying to stop people evading them.

The theoretical justification for the controls is that they give everyone his fair share. Notoriously they don't. But they cost a lot of money to operate. They subtract from our labour supply, at a time of acute labour shortage, a force of scores of thousands of men and women. And the effect of controls has been to make us all dishonest to a greater or less degree. What the effect of all this on the moral fibre of our people has been and will be it is impossible to calculate. It is not merely that we are all doing things that, strictly speaking, we ought not to do. It is that we are developing an attitude of mind to Governments and to law,

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which is inimical to ordered society. Society does not rest primarily on the police or the armed forces—though they are there in reserve, for use if necessary. It rests primarily upon respect for the law. By tradition, and by nature, we are a law-abiding people. This last seven years we have become a law-breaking people.

What is the conclusion to be drawn from all this? That we should throw controls to the winds regardless of circumstances? Not at all. But we should do two things. We should get rid of controls that are not plainly overridingly necessary. And as regards the rest, in all calculations as to how soon we can remove them we should take into account the all-pervading corruption which they bring in their turn, and be prepared to take risks which we might otherwise not be prepared to take, or take only at a much later date.

For this evil is grave. And it might, in certain circumstances, be mortal.

CHAPTER 21



Restrictive Practices — T.U.C. and Government — Germany To-day

TO-DAY—Thursday—one awoke to the consciousness that the air was definitely warm; not merely not cold, but positively, beneficently warm. The sky was overcast, but by noon we were running under clear skies, and sunshine, which in the sheltered side of the ship was really hot, streamed down on the deck. I don't know what mean streak in us it is that makes us appreciate our blessings the greater by contrast with the misfortune of our fellows! But I appreciated the warm sunshine all the more because the radio news spoke of extreme cold and fog in London, and cuts in the electricity supply, all over England.

I spent a couple of hours on my next article for the *Evening Standard*. I left behind me when I came away a couple of articles to cover my absence during the journey, but I must have some more ready when I reach Jamaica to send to New York by air mail for cabling to London. This morning I wrote on "1946—a Retrospect," and said some things which urgently need saying, though they will hardly be popular with my Labour colleagues. But with them one can only be popular if one echoes the shibboleths and voicest the hatreds of the Party, and I've long since ceased to believe the one or to feel the other.

I spoke in my article of the difficulty for a Labour Government dependent mainly on the Trade Unions in tackling the restrictive practices which are so large an element in the problem of production in Britain. Later, Gammans quotes a personal experience which bears on the point. In Germany to-day there are some 300,000 Poles, mostly young, who don't want to return to Poland. Gammans visited some of them in the displaced persons' camps in Germany. He asked how many of them would be willing to come to England on say a ten-year contract to cut coal in English mines. Pretty well all of them professed eagerness

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to do so. But so far the Miners' Union has not been willing to allow Poles already in Britain to work in the mines, and still less to allow Poles from Germany to be brought in. Yet coal is at the heart of our problem. We need timber from Sweden for housing, for poles for electricity supplies, and a dozen other purposes. The Swedes won't send us timber because we can't send them the coal they need. France needs coal desperately for her industrial recovery. She can't get it from us so she demands all she can get from the Ruhr. This in turn makes German recovery vital, not merely to Germany, but to all Europe, impossible. A hundred thousand extra miners would transform our industrial and economic situation. We can't have them. The Trade Unions won't permit and the Government does not dare to quarrel with the Unions.

In France they used to call the black market *le Marché Noir*. More recently they have taken to calling it *le Marché Parallèle*—the parallel market. In Britain to-day the T.U.C. occupies the position of *le Gouvernement Parallèle*. It does not govern, but it negatively controls the Government. Nothing that touches the interest of the wage earners is decided without prior reference to the T.U.C. Its veto is decision. And it is being exercised, at a time of acute labour shortage, to veto the employment of foreigners in the pits. The miners, it is said, fear that unemployment will come again some years from now, and that then English miners might be out of a job while Poles were retained. It ought to be perfectly possible to provide that in the event of unemployment the Poles should be the first to go. But if we don't get the coal we need hundreds of thousands of Englishmen will be out of work in other industries than mining, and our export position may become impossible.

The Government must know the position of the country. And I cannot doubt that the leaders know it too. What is lacking is moral courage, which is about the rarest thing in public life to-day.

Gammans, who has been in a state of somnolent torpor ever since he came aboard, revived to-day and startled everybody by appearing in khaki shirt and shorts, and tennis shoes, and trotting energetically round the deck this morning eight times without stopping. I am exhorted on all hands to follow this high example. But I reply that most of the devotees of strenuous exercise whom

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I have known have died from heart failure at a relatively early age. Moreover, I recall the motto of Lord Reith that one should never do anything standing up which one can do sitting down, or do anything sitting down which one can do lying down! But if provoked enough, I will put my fellow-passengers through a series of Yoga exercises which will put them all out of action for a week. And I will an' all! For my rotundity is deceptive.

I am in my lightest tropical suit, and the captain is to get into his "whites" to-morrow. Other passengers are also shedding their winter togs; and knobbly knees abound. We are passing through the Sargasso Sea. I had thought of this as covered with masses of seaweed. But all one sees is an occasional small drift of brownish-yellow weed drifting by from time to time. It is to this area of the ocean that eels come to die, or to get married, or to be devoured or to have their young—I don't know which, and I can't be bothered about it anyway! I do not allow eels to interfere with my love-life, and nothing shall induce me to butt into theirs.

Gammans's reference to Germany set my mind revolving on the two visits I paid to that unhappy country. It was a sobering and indeed a frightening experience. When, during the war, one had lain abed in England and had heard the roar and rumble of our air fleets passing overhead on their nightly bombing missions, one was sickeningly conscious that in a few hours some German city would be undergoing a worse hell than we ourselves had endured. But until one actually saw Germany, one had no real idea of the appalling character of our bombing attacks. Imagination paled before the reality. Hamburg, except for a tringe about the lake beside which it stands, was blasted to utter chaos. For square mile after square mile there was not a whole building standing. Roadways had been cleared through the rubble by the expedient of shovelling the debris into huge heaps on either side. But none yet had been removed. In England there was not a bomb-site which had not been cleared. In the German towns I saw there was hardly one that had. The mere business of shifting the debris, under which lay uncounted thousands of corpses, would take, it seemed to me, a decade or more of the most energetic effort. The rebuilding would take many decades—if indeed they ever rebuilt at all.

In Nuremberg, to which I went to take a look at the trial of

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Goering and company, the whole of the ancient and beautiful walled city had been utterly destroyed in two mammoth raids—one by the Americans and one by the British. Nothing we had experienced in Britain—at Coventry, Plymouth, Bristol, and elsewhere, could in any way compare with that awful and utter devastation. In history books as a child one had read of cities being “sacked,” and the word conveyed a nameless picture of destruction. What I saw in Germany was not “sacking.” It was obliteration. One asked oneself whether it was physically possible for Germany ever to recover, or whether it would not remain for ever a desert in the heart of Europe, peopled by men and women living permanently in holes in the ruins. And one was by no means sure about the answer. Yet somehow people carried on amid all this filth and destruction. At night candle-light in some crazy structure of what was once a building indicated that someone had found a corner of it which could still afford some little shelter, or smoke came up from some hole in the ground. During the day, water-carts would go through these avenues of debris, and women would emerge from nowhere with a pail or jug to draw their supplies. From a hole in the ruins would emerge a neatly dressed German with mackintosh and brief-case all correct. It was incredible. But it was true.

Berlin presented the spectacle of cascades of ruin in concrete. Some little attempt had been made to clear up the devastation, but the impression of diabolical and ferocious destruction remained. The nominal currency had gone to glory. The official rate was forty marks to the pound. The street rate was about six hundred to the pound. The real currency was cigarettes, which rated sixty marks—nominally equivalent to thirty shillings—for a packet of ten. If one stood in the streets smoking a cigarette one would become conscious of figures vaguely floating about one in circles, which grew smaller as the cigarette neared its end. And then when the butt was thrown away there would be a scramble—in which middle-aged men, women, and children would share—to retrieve the precious fragment. Such incidents symbolized all Germany to-day—a nation beaten, broken, hungry, stretching out eager hands for the fag-ends afforded by the visitors.

Are they penitent or sorry? Penitent—no! Sorry—yes! But only sorry because they lost the war, not because there is any penitence for having started it. It is right, they think, that they

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should suffer. It is right that the victors should take the spoils. For Germany lost the war. And in the German code the loser pays. If we had lost there would have been no mercy shown by them to us. They would have left us only our eyes to weep with.

It is not for mercy's sake that Germany must be restored. It is for Europe's sake and the world's sake. For we cannot live with this cesspit festering in the heart of Europe. Pestilence knows no frontiers—neither the pestilence of the body nor the diseased ideas of the mind.

It is very much of an open question whether in winning the war we did not in fact lose it, or at least the objects for which we fought it. We have destroyed the absolutism of Hitler, but we have put most of Europe under the absolutism of the Bolsheviki. And the rest of Europe hangs in the balance. Eastern, South-Eastern Europe have gone. Eastern Germany has gone. There is now only Western Germany and France. If France goes there will be no basis on the European Continent for the kind of civilization we fought to preserve—a civilization in which men can speak freely without fear of arrest, torture, the concentration camp, and death.

Last summer I stood in Hitler's room in the Chancellery in Berlin. The vast room was empty now. Of the two immense crystal candelabra which had illuminated that room one still hung from the ceiling. The other lay, a mass of twisted metal and shattered crystal on the floor. I remembered his dark threat that if he went down he would drag all Europe down to destruction with him. History has yet to prove him wrong.

CHAPTER 22



The Captain — Lady Astor — T. E. Lawrence *— Prison Reform*

THERE is a certain technique which the captain of such a ship as this observes in his dealings with the passengers. In the beginning he is an aloof, reserved, and reticent figure. What sort of a crowd the passengers will disclose themselves to be is a matter of some doubt. But gradually the captain unbends a little. He takes part in the conversation at table. He responds to queries as to what weather we shall get, and when we shall arrive at our destination. After a few days he appears in the saloon at the hour for pink gin, and condescends to join us land-lubbers in a friendly glass. Gradually he becomes a familiar figure and a friend. Towards the end of the voyage, by which time he has sorted us all out, he allows us sometimes to go up on the bridge and to inspect the chartroom and to watch the ship being steered.

Last night he invited a few of us—Gammans and wife, Mrs. Knight from Lancashire, Mrs. Blagrove (Lady Mary's mother), and me for a drink or two before dinner. It is a neat little cabin, the captain's, just behind the chartroom on the bridge, with his bedroom opening off it. A settee, a desk with swivel-chair, a bookcase, a chair or two and a table comprise its equipment. It is light and cheerful in a peach-coloured paint.

During the war this ship did good service. Doing up to sixteen knots she usually travelled alone, and not in convoy. Twice she was torpedoed. One torpedo blew away the lower portion of the bow. The second hit her amidships and smashed into the engine-room. In those days the captain lived on the bridge and in the little cabin behind the chartroom. Usually in the cabin at night he sat in darkness. For when a man goes from a lighted cabin out on to the bridge on a dark night, it takes as long as twenty minutes for the eyes to adjust themselves completely. The captain had to be prepared to go out at a second's notice.

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To sit in the dark was the only way to be immediately and fully effective, and upon his being so might depend the life of the ship and its crew.

We had a pleasant hour with him before dinner and another one thereafter.

To-day, Friday, the weather has been kind. The sun has shone all day, and around five p.m. this evening it went down in a blaze of glory, painting the sky with breath-taking beauty. We have seen our first flying-fish. A canvas swimming pool has been rigged up aft, and the younger passengers have been disporting themselves in water at a temperature of about 70 degrees. An approaching-the-end-of-the-journey atmosphere pervades the ship. Everybody is relaxed and easy. There are even one or two discreet flirtations in progress. The chemistry of contiguity, the magic of sunshine and fresh air, dispose some hearts to romance. I watch approvingly, for:

They are not long, the days of wine and roses
Out of a misty dream,
Our path emerges for a while, then closes
Within a dream."

Let the young love and be happy while they may, and as they can. It is a hell of a world my generation has left to them, and I will not grudge them such moments of happiness as they can extract from it.

The cabin which I occupy on the ship was, on the last occasion, some time ago, that this ship took passengers, occupied by Lady Astor. She was the first woman to take a seat in the British House of Commons. Not the first to be elected to Parliament. That distinction went to the Countess Marckiewitz, who was elected for Cork, but declined to take her seat. It is characteristic of our British way of doing things that the first woman to be elected to its Parliament should be an Irishwoman, and the first woman to take a seat in it, an American. After this the English and the Scots and the Welsh women began modestly to creep in to their own Parliament!

Lady Astor had many claims to notice. She was one of the few Christian Scientists in the House. She was easily the best dressed of the women. And miles and away the most difficult to put down when she had something she wanted to say. At Question Time

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she would turn up, invariably late and in a hurry, take her seat at the corner of the third row below the gangway on the Conservative side of the House, and from that position on the mountain keep up a lively fire of comment and criticism of the Front Bench, and cross-talk with members on the opposite side of the House. Everybody liked her, and she had an unusual degree of licence extended to her, partly in her own right, as being "a character," partly because she was a woman. The Clyde Group got on especially well with her. Something in her rebellious spirit matched something in theirs, and deep responded unto deep. The stories told about her were legion, mostly apocryphal, extremely funny, and some incapable of repetition in mixed company. T. E. Lawrence—"Aircraftman Shaw"—found in her a second mother, and there is a collection of his letters to her in the British Museum. The world, which values the externals of success, could never understand why Lawrence, after the first World War, when he could have had, for his services in Arabia, any reward he cared to name, should bury himself as an *aircraftman* under an assumed name, in the R.A.F. Had Lawrence been living in the Middle Ages he would probably have gone into a monastery. As it was, the R.A.F. provided a substitute which solved for Lawrence the problem of the mechanics of life, relieved him of responsibility, and provided the refuge he needed.

Lady Astor retired at the last election. At that election twenty-three women M.P.s were returned. But none of them is so colourful, spontaneous, and cheerfully reckless a figure as "Nancy" by which affectionate name she was known by political friend and political foe alike. Of personal foes she had none. How on earth her husband keeps this volatile bundle of energy safely harnessed to domesticity I do not pretend to know.

Conversation runs to-day on the Forgotten Ones, the prison population of Britain, those 15,000 men and women whom society shuts away behind prison bars, and then conveniently forgets. On this matter it is extraordinarily difficult to avoid the extremes of indifference on the one hand, and sentimentality on the other—the indifference of the type of mind which dismisses the subject with a "they've asked for it, anyway," and the sentimentality which blames "society" for making the criminal, and in any controversy about prison conditions treats the prisoner as

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a hero, and the prison officer as a sadistic brute. I have had the advantage of acting as adviser to the Prison Officers' Association for some years in regard to such matters as pay and conditions of service, and am able to see their side of the case as well as that of the prisoner. So I express my mind on this matter.

In the problem of Prison Reform there are a number of elements—the prisons themselves, the administration, the staff, the prisoners, and above all the Treasury. No conspectus will be complete which does not take all these into account—and above all His Majesty's Treasury. Everything in the way of reform in Britain comes down ultimately to a question of money. Behind every problem there is the ghost of the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Take, for example, the prisons themselves. Most, indeed nearly all, were built in the first half of the nineteenth century. They are ugly, dispiriting, horrible buildings, calculated to depress the spirit of even the casual visitor, and to induce permanent melancholia on the part of the prisoners. They ought all to be blown up, as successive Home Secretaries have realized and sometimes—as with Mr. Herbert Morrison—proclaimed. But to blow them up and replace them with modern buildings of a suitable type would cost a lot of money—quite apart from the current shortage of labour and building materials. And every Minister is sitting on the Chancellor's doorstep with demands for more money for objects deemed to be more important and urgent than the building of new prisons. So the old monstrosities remain, and, to a large extent, condition administration and the treatment of prisoners.

So with the staffing of prisons. There are far too few officers and those that there are, are badly underpaid. "Don't expect the warder to have a heart," said Bernard Shaw, "his pay won't allow him to!" From this shortage of staff all sorts of evil consequences spring. The fewer the staff, the less possible it is to treat the prisoners as individual cases, the more they have to be treated "in the mass." Again, the fewer the number of officers the greater the liability of attacks by prisoners on such officers as there are. The greater the liability of attack, the more highly strained is the officer. The more highly strained the officer, the more likely he is to react sharply against possible trouble; the more repressive he is inclined to be. When you have seen your colleagues attacked and beaten up, sometimes to the point of making an idiot out

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of a strong and intelligent man, you become disinclined to run any avoidable risk yourself. But this, too, is a question of money. To get the necessary staff you must give reasonably attractive rates of pay. It isn't a pleasant job, being a prison officer. Your "sentence" is not for six months or six years, but, so to speak, for a working lifetime. So we are back again to His Majesty's Treasury.

This money difficulty conditions even what can be done within the existing prisons, even to the choice of the colour of the internal paintwork. Dark and sombre colours show less dirt and last longer than bright and cheerful ones. So to the natural gloom of the buildings is added the unnecessary gloom of dark-coloured paint.

But fundamentally the problem of the prisons is a problem of administration. Now the administration has a mind divided as to the purpose which imprisonment is meant to serve. Our ancestors were under no doubt on this point. Imprisonment served two purposes. It punished the man who had offended against society, and it put him away for a while where he could do no more harm. But as time went on the punitive conception was supplemented by another—the reformatory conception. The idea was not so much to punish the offender, but to reform him and make him a useful member of society. This conception, however, did not supersede the old. It was superimposed upon it. Now these two conceptions are mutually hostile. You can follow one or the other. But you cannot follow both simultaneously, for if you do you fall between two stools. You neither punish adequately in the old sense, nor reform in the new sense. And your administration will be paralysed between the two conceptions. This, roughly, is our position to-day. The buildings are primitive, the discipline is primitive—i.e. it rests on a series of punishments. And the "reformatory" elements in the system are largely frustrated.

The first question to be decided in respect of a prisoner is: "Is he capable of being reformed?" If he is, and if you want to reform him, then everything should be subordinated to that end. If he isn't, then the purpose is to protect society from him, and the problem is neither one of punishment nor reform. It is to keep the offender from again offending—and that involves merely maintenance and detention; no more.

Now assuming that most offenders are capable of being

The Captain

reformed, what we need to do, broadly speaking, is to invert, to turn upside down, our prison system. Having segregated the unreformable from the reformable, the central idea, in dealing with the latter, is to rebuild their self-respect, and to overcome or transmute the pathological condition which led to crime in the first place. It is broadly true that our system reduces self-respect to zero, and supplements one pathological condition by others of an equally anti-social character.

Everything about a prison is calculated not to promote self-respect but to destroy it. The drab, ill-fitting uniform clothing, the ugly and ill-fitting boots, the primitive sanitary arrangements, the food—not intrinsically bad, but half-cold by the time it comes to be brought to the cells—and above all the absence of any adequate form of self-expression—these do not promote self-respect but its opposite.

To be imprisoned for a period of months or years; to be cut off from friends and loved ones; to have all one's normal outlets blocked up, to live according to a routine which does not vary from day to day and week to week—this is in itself a formidable punishment. But it is supplemented by the reduction of a human being to a cipher, a nameless unit in an amorphous mass, and by all the indignities which I have mentioned and many others.

If a man who is imprisoned is to be reformed we ought not to add, to the stopping up of so many normal outlets which the very fact of imprisonment involves, a lot more which are wholly unnecessary. Why should a prisoner be "rationed" in the books he can read, or the number of letters he is allowed to write? Even in the prisons of the Czar, political prisoners were allowed all the paper they needed, and very many books were written by political offenders while they were imprisoned. Why should a prisoner be denied tobacco? The judge never sentenced him to be so deprived. He sentenced him to be imprisoned. The deprivation of tobacco, like so many other deprivations, is added to the judge's sentence by the Prison Commission. These restrictions add greatly to the work of the prison officer and to the tension of prison life. The vast majority of all "trafficking" offences in prisons centre on this matter of tobacco, the craving for which is much stronger than the craving for alcohol.

It should be a standing rule that the more completely normal outlets are stopped up the more widely should we keep open

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such outlets as are possible in the conditions of prison life. The outstanding feature of prison life is frustration. It is this sense of utter frustration which makes something snap in a man's brain and leads him to the "smashing-up" of the contents of his cell which is so common a manifestation in prison life. How to keep a man interestedly, usefully, and salutarily employed is the problem. We have made a beginning in the employment of prison schoolmasters and tradesmen; but it is a very inadequate beginning. Training should be available in a dozen different crafts and occupations, if the prisoner is to be kept usefully occupied while in prison and fitted for civilian life when he comes out. Sewing mail-bags is no substitute for this sort of occupation and training. I am ashamed to say that one of the obstacles to the performance of useful work in prisons and to the rehabilitation of the prisoner in civilian life is the attitude of the Trade Unions. They don't like prisoners doing useful work, for that is regarded as "black-legging," and the rules of many Unions preclude their taking into membership men who have not gone through the customary trade apprenticeship. With the coming of the "closed shop," under which a man cannot get a job unless he has a Trade Union ticket, this difficulty, unless the attitude of the Unions is modified, will become greater than even it is now.

At the present time there is a great shortage of accommodation for boys sent for Borstal treatment. This has led to their being accommodated in wings of the prisons, as at Wormwood Scrubs. A boy will spend anything up to six months under prison conditions before he can be accommodated in a Borstal institution. This is quite intolerable. It is better that such boys should not be sentenced to Borstal treatment at all, than that in boyhood and early adolescence they should be familiarized with the dreadful conditions of prison life. Such Borstal or prison sentences should always be a last resort. There is a boy in my constituency of Rugby. He was not naturally a bad boy. He got in with a gang of lads of his own age—just as I did, and you, too, in all probability, dear reader—who ran wild of an evening. They did some "breaking and entering" and were caught. It was this boy's first appearance in a Court. He was sentenced to three years' Borstal detention. Up till now—this was six months ago—he has spent his time in Stafford Prison. His old employer says that he was a good boy at work. He is willing to take him on again. The boy's mother grieves over him continually. And the boy is rotting in

The Captain

jail, where the things he will learn are not those calculated to make a good citizen out of him, but precisely the reverse. I've since got him out, he is now doing a useful job.

While the shortage of Borstal accommodation persists magistrates should be urged not to give Borstal sentences at all. Even when the shortage is overcome, Borstal or prison sentences should be the last resort. I am not an advocate of corporal punishment, but it would be infinitely less harmful to give a lad a good thrashing and send him back to work than to herd him together with other boys in the prison conditions of to-day.

Some while ago I went down to Wormwood Scrubs to lecture to the Borstal boys on "How Parliament Works." The experiment was so successful that I was asked to repeat it with the adult prisoners there, and since then I have got other Members to give talks. My impression of the boys was that they fell roughly into two types—the sub-normal boy with a deficient sense of right and wrong, and the clever, precocious boy who, having found that his cleverness enabled him to "get away with it" in his first adventures in wrong-doing, had relied on his cleverness once too often. For the first type imprisonment is no good whatever. For the second it is harmful. For there the "smart aleck" mixes with others of his own ilk and learns from and teaches them. The effect is not to reform him; but to make him resolve to be more clever next time.

CHAPTER 23



Life at Sea — The Ship's Library — Displaced Persons — Christmas Carols

IT is Sunday. For the last two or three days we have been running with a following sea—for we are in the Gulf Stream, which, having crossed the Atlantic from west to east, runs south to the Azores and back across the Atlantic again—and a following wind. The sun has shone brilliantly, and it is hotter than a summer's day in England—when we have a hot summer's day in England! And the sea has the blue of Mary's robe.

I marvel at the disparity of fortune which keeps millions shivering and freezing in England while I bask in the sunshine, gossip lazily on the deck, play a game of deck quoits, or flop about in the warm sea water of the canvas swimming-bath.

Of all the passengers I am first up in the mornings. By the time they begin to appear I have usually done an hour's writing or more. I was born to work. It is in my nature to be what Jack London described as a "work-beast." If I go for a day without doing some work I develop a puritanical sense of sin. When at length my fellow-passengers appear, I run with them round the deck, and get them to share in the Yoga exercises which I practise, and which stretch every muscle in the body and make one break out in a profuse perspiration. Then we jump into the swimming-bath and get cool there before going down to breakfast. Then there is the long lie in the sunshine on the leeward deck, which soothes and relaxes brain, nerves, and muscles.

The food, after the last few years of rationing, seems extremely good. Indeed it is, I should think, up to pre-war standards. Eggs and bacon, only separated from each other during two wars since the days of Chaucer, are here happily reunited. The kippered herring is not an alternative, but a supplement, thereto. Yet, surprisingly, after the first day or two one eats very little more than when on rations at home. I suppose our stomachs and our

Life at Sea

systems have become adjusted to war-time quantities of food, and that even if, and if ever, the days of plenty come again, we shall not eat the meals we ate before the war.

The ship's "library," if one may so call it, consists of about thirty books mostly of the detective-yarn type, and poorly done at that. I should imagine this "library" was hastily bought from a bookshop in Belfast about an hour before we sailed, and that the selection, if selection there was, was made by one of the stewards. But amongst the trash I find a book by Remarque—of *All Quiet on the Western Front*—which deals with the life of the Stateless refugee in Paris in the years before the war. It is an immensely saddening book. But the facts to-day are still more saddening. For where there were hundreds of Stateless people there are now hundreds of thousands—Poles who cannot go back to Poland under its present tyranny, Germans expelled from the Sudetenland, Russians who have deserted from the Soviet forces rather than go back to the "workers' paradise," Jews who have neither State nor homeland. . . .

The captain tells us a story which illustrates the ridiculous situations which can arise. Once, at Kingston, Jamaica, he found himself short of a fireman. It was suggested to him that he should take on a negro named John Lewis. He did so, and found that he had got a jewel. When many of the firemen fell sick of influenza, John Lewis not only kept at work, but tended his ailing mates with all the care and thoughtfulness of a skilled nurse. He was always happy, cheerful, and obliging. Now it seems that John Lewis had, earlier on in life, got himself involved in a brawl in which knives had been used. The Jamaican authorities would have deported him if he had been a foreigner, but since he was a native deportation was not possible. But once he had set foot on the ship they would not allow him to land again. Nor would the United States have him. The captain was put under bond for 5,000 dollars to keep guard over him while the ship was in American ports. So for years John Lewis worked as fireman while the ship was at sea, and moved into a cabin under guard while it was in port! But there came a time when this ship had to be broken up. Some country, thought the captain, would now have to take John Lewis. The captain told the authorities so. But no! John Lewis, it seemed, would have to be broken up with the ship! The problem was met by transferring the negro to another ship in the same line, and he is still sailing the seas and being put

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under guard in port. He will have to go on doing this it appears as long as he lives. Jamaica won't have him back, and no other country will take him in, give him nationality, and relieve him of his Statelessness. Presumably he will ultimately be buried at sea. . . .

It being a Sunday, and Christmas only three days away, we have this evening a Christmas Carol Party in the aft lounge after dinner. The evening was one of great beauty, the breeze soft, the air balmy, and the stars very bright. Our singing was punctuated by the splashing of young bodies in the swimming-pool, vague and ghostly in the dim starlight. We sing all the old carols, and as we sing, what few constraints still exist amongst us after two weeks at sea, disappear, and we become completely simple and natural. Each of us thinks of loved ones in whatever part of the earth he or she has left, and we grow one in a common emotion.

It is interesting to watch the effect of this voyage upon each other. Gammans, who was extremely tired when he came aboard and collapsed into sleep at each and every occasion, is now sleep-sated. He is now quite energetic, running round the decks of a morning, playing deck-quoits, and generally evidencing renewed life and vigour. His wife, who also looked extremely tired and edgy when the trip started, is now relaxed and composed and looks much younger. Mrs. Blagrove, who for years has had the responsibility of looking after crowds of young Wrens, and of living up to the very masculine traditions of the Navy, has got the chips of worry and responsibility off her shoulders, and now adds a look of quiet peace to her very distinguished appearance. Her daughter—Lady Mary—who was pretty well dumb with misery over the recent death of her husband—has unfolded her petals under the warmth of the sunshine, and the attentions of all the young men aboard—and is beginning to find life worth living again. Twenty-five years old, she has the body of adolescence, and male eyes watch her admiringly wherever she goes—including mine. The school teachers, normally very prim and proper, as becomes those who have the care of the young, have almost forgotten that they are teachers, and have remembered that they are women and comely ones at that. The Jamaican doctor has disclosed a warm and eager personality, and has become a general favourite. Mrs. Montgomery, extremely tall

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and angular, with a general air of finding life too complicated for her, has forgotten all about her little dog (who has been adopted by one of the stewards, who faithfully exercises it every day and has it to sleep with him o' nights) and has vaguely and helplessly fluttered from one flirtation to another, all of them harmless. The Colonial Civil Servant from Zanzibar, very reserved at first, has manifested a lively and gentle sense of humour—and I hope he gets his promotion. Mrs Knight, of Lancashire, and proud of it, middle-aged and placid, has smilingly agreed with everybody. Mrs. Pang, the Chinese lady, and the Trinidad lawyer, alone have had a rather thin time. Both have suffered a good deal from seasickness, and the lawyer is so seriously minded that he even reads law in the sunshine, which carries ambition to the point of folly.

And now as the trip draws to a close, one feels a curious disinclination to part with them all. To-morrow, one must pack, for the following morning—Christmas Eve—we shall run into Kingston by breakfast time. The routine of ship's life, the complete absence of external worries, the inaccessibility of the daily post, and the vile invention of the telephone—all these have created a delicious sense of comfortable ease; of which I feel that I could do with a good deal more! I should be very content to drift effortlessly along like this for another month or so, "the world forgetting, by the world forgot." But that cannot be, and I am grateful for this respite.

CHAPTER 24



Last Day Out — We Reach Jamaica — Jamaican Advertisements

EARLY this morning we passed Turk's Island. It is one of a group of islands through which runs a deep-water channel. The islands lie very low in the water, and indeed appeared to be little more than dark smudges on the horizon in the half light of dawn. We have put on speed, and all five boilers are now working, for word has come of a cargo of citrous fruit to be picked up as quickly as possible. This morning the water in the swimming bath was positively warm.

After breakfast I saw an unusual sky effect. The sun shone brightly. The sea was a deep blue, flecked with touches of vivid white from the waves. Flying fish left the water in flocks and skimmed just above the surface of the water away from the ship, the sunlight gleaming upon their bodies and making them almost transparent. And then on the horizon where there was a bank of cloud appeared a rainbow. It was a complete one, and its colours were glorious. For a full half hour it stayed there, and its beauty was awesome.

After lunch we pass the island of Haiti, which appears to be covered with a kind of scrub and to be quite uninhabited. But we are told that it is only this northern side of the island which presents this barren appearance.

The day is the hottest and stickiest so far, the temperature at lunch time being ninety degrees. But in the afternoon a cool breeze springs up and conditions become delightful. At dinner Gammans proposes the health of the Captain, which we drink in a glass of port. The Captain has been extremely thoughtful and kind throughout the trip, and has done much to make things go with a swing, so we drink enthusiastically. He himself says that he cannot remember a better trip than this. After dinner on the aft-deck a race meeting is staged. We have six "hosses." Mrs.

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Knight casts a dice, and the number she throws signifies which horse is to move. I throw another, and the number I throw signifies how many squares the horse is to move forward. The whole of the crew except the chaps on the boilers, and the steersman up on the bridge, are present; and passenger and crew stake their modest bets. Lady Mary does my betting for me and we divide the winnings—getting five shillings and threepence each, an unusual experience for me. For two hours our race meeting lasts, and then the passengers assemble in the saloon for the last friendly drinks of the voyage. There we exchange addresses—in Jamaica and at home—and promise that we will look each other up. It is all very simple and kindly, and in a queer sort of way a little touching, as all endings are. One or two of us probably will run into each other—but in the main our paths, which for a fortnight have been parallel, will now diverge and most of us will not see each other more.

Christmas Eve. I rose at 5.30 a.m., slipped on a raincoat, for my dressing gown was packed, and went out on to the deck. Dawn had not yet come, and the stars shone brilliantly. Above the aft mast shone Venus, at her furthest point from the sun. It glowed and twinkled like three stars rolled into one, incredibly brightly. I went barefooted along the deck, stripped off my raincoat, and mother-naked, went into the bathing pool. In a few minutes the slight after-effects of last night's good fellowship had passed away, and I was fresh and alert. I shaved, dressed, and then packed my shaving tackle, and the few remaining odds and ends, and sat down to write till dawn. Jamaica was on our starboard bow, rising high from the water a mile or two away. As the dawn broke, the light lit up the vague shape of the land, and one saw hills rising above hulls to the skyline. By eight o'clock we were at Port Royal. The sun was now up, and the water, calm and still in the shelter of the land, reflected its light as in a mirror. A light haze, promising great heat later on, hung over the land, pearly in the sun's rays.

At Port Royal there came aboard a representative of the shipping company, a doctor, and an Immigration Officer. They took up their posts in the saloon. "How are you, Mr. Brown?" said the doctor. "Fine, thanks," said I—and that was my medical inspection over. "Glad to meet you, to welcome you to Jamaica," said the Immigration Official, as he stamped my passport—and

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that was my immigration inspection over. Mentally I contrasted this with Belfast, to Belfast's disadvantage. But the shipping company's representative gave me a shock. He told me that Lord Beaverbrook was in Nassau, not Jamaica, but that his secretary would be meeting me at the quayside, with fuller information.

Over the glassy sea we drew slowly into Kingston. Rowing boats drew alongside. From two of them, two brown-bodied youths, one no more than fourteen and as naked as when he came into the world, began diving and calling upon us to drop coins in the water. They swam like fishes and dived like porpoises, stuffing the coins as they retrieved them, into their mouths. For half an hour they accompanied the ship as slowly she moved into harbour and brought up at the quayside. Meantime I had been saying goodbye to the folks aboard. I kissed all the women, without exception, and gathered an astonishing variety of lipstick marks upon my countenance. All of them enjoyed being kissed, including the grave and quiet Mrs. Pang, the Chinese lady. She was a little coy, but bucked up no end when the operation was over!

At the quayside, the gangway was lowered and there came aboard the Governor's aide-de-camp, who greeted Gammans and me from his Excellency, and put matters in trim for taking Gammans and his wife to King's House, the official residence, where they are to stay. Came aboard, too, Lord Beaverbrook's secretary, who it turned out was a sort of cousin to Lady Mary, who greeted him heartily with her mother. Both told him that whatever my lord's plans were, he must bring me to visit them at Hopewell, Dry Harbour, in the lovely old planter's house of Mrs. Blagrove's brother-in-law. Came, too, pressmen to interview Gammans and me for the local paper. Then I was able to get to grips with Lord Beaverbrook's secretary. His Lordship had been unwell, he said. He had contracted a chill and now had a spot on one of his lungs and had had to go into hospital. He would be telephoning from Nassau at one p.m. In the light of what he then said, I must decide whether to fly to Nassau to-day, or wait his return to Jamaica in a few days' time. Meantime, just in case, he would fix up for an American visa for me. We went ashore, got through Customs and currency formalities in a few moments, and drove in Lord Beaverbrook's newly acquired Chrysler—a lovely bus!—to the Myrtle Grove Hotel, where I

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sat me down in the palm-fringed garden on the edge of the sea and drank copious draughts of tea while the secretary went off to the American Consul with my passport.

In the town it was extremely hot, and one missed the ship's breeze, which for days past has tempered the heat to us. But the secretary tells me it will be much cooler at Montego Bay—five hours' drive away on the north-west side of the island. He gives me a telegram of Christmas greetings from a friend in England and a letter from the ever-faithful Jean Cormack, my secretary, keeping me posted with my affairs there. What I should do without that quiet, methodical, efficient, and unfailing secretary of mine I do not know. She is a pearl among secretaries, a gem amongst human beings. And after thirty years of putting up with me, I am still, incredibly, a hero to her.

In the palm-fringed garden I read a copy of *The Daily Gleaner*, the newspaper of Jamaica—and twenty-four pages at that! Bustamanta, who is Minister of Communications in the local Government, occupies a fair amount of space. Christmas advertisements occupy much more. Among these was the following somewhat striking production:—

SHERWOOD'S CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

O! Christmas stay not forever on the tables of the rich, in the bosom of the bankers, in the dreams of the writers of the Christmas Anthems and Carols, but come and dwell and make thy home among the humble and poor. The Christ was humble and poor, born in a Manger while Shepherds watched their flocks by night and the rich sought to destroy and kill Him, and while it is simple and easy to wish a Merry Xmas I cannot join in the singing of the Xmas Anthems and Carols, because not far from the Churches and Tabernacles in which these Songs and Carols are being so melodiously sung there are the widows' hands of beggary and the white lips of poverty longing for a Xmas in truth and in fact and in an unbalanced Economy. Xmas and Money are one and the same, for without Money no Xmas, and no Xmas without Money.

I sincerely wish the People of Jamaica will cease to regard Business, Commerce and Industries as a Cauldron of boiling oil, or as a consuming Vault of flaming fire ready to destroy them, but instead think of same as a hobby, or endless reservoir in and upon which there will be space for talent and initiative. No people or country can rise higher than its Commerce and Industries I hope and do sincerely hope that the People of Jamaica will in 1947 open their eyes and see for themselves, and overcome all obstacles in Unity and Harmony for a better Jamaica.

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How can the Labourer continue to say that he and his Capitalist Boss must work in harmony when he has been doing this for years producing disastrous effects—a richer Capitalist and a poorer Labourer.

I therefore thank the thousands who have given me their support from all parts of Jamaica and its Dependencies. I wish to assure them that the Competent Authority will have no need to control any Commodity that I can lay my hands on. I shall do my utmost best to match low prices with the present low salaries

I adopt this medium of expressing my thanks to all of you my supporters, friends and well wishers, for your kind patronage during the closing year, and still rely and solicit your continued support for the year 1947.

Wishing you a Merry Xmas, and a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

I remain,
In the Name of the Great Architect
of the Universe, The Fatherhood of
God and the Brotherhood of Man,

Yours very truly

GEORGE VERNORD SHERWOOD
(Advt.).

The "Wanted" advertisements page is extremely interesting. What tragedy lies behind the following:—

Wanted—A Dog Lover to Give a good home to a brown mongrel pup, in good condition, the first six months of whose life was spent in extreme misery. Apply —

And what unhappy earlier experience underlies the following:—

For Rent: A Room for A Single Man but respectable, with electric light. Save yourself the trouble to apply to Mr. E. Stanley, 6 Lacy Road, if you are the opposite.

Alas, landlords, as well as tenants, have their little troubles.

Very blunt are some of the advertisements.

Wanted: A Decent Girl As Milk Maid Must be capable of keeping accounts. Must have testimonials. No logger-head need apply at 51 North Street.

The labour market in Jamaica appears to be in a bad state. Thus:—

Wanted immediately. An Honest, hardworking woman as general maid for a small family, one who can wash and iron nicely. Wages 9/- weekly and meals Apply —

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But perhaps best of all I like the following:—

NOTICE

Take Notice that I, Vincent Powell, intend to sell to Yap Yue Tong my bakery business known as the National Township Bakery situate at 140 Orange Street in the parish of Kingston, twenty one days from the date hereof and that I will not be responsible for any debts contracted by the said Yap Yue Tong.

Also Take Notice that I, Yap Yue Tong, intend to purchase the aforesaid business from Vincent Powell twenty one days from the date hereof and that I will not be responsible for any debts owing by Vincent Powell.

Dated the 23rd Day of December 1946

(Sgd) Vincent Powell

(Sgd) Yap Yue Tong

Now what could be fairer than that?

It is possible to question the coherency of the following: but not its kindly spirit:—

SEASON GREETINGS

to all our Friends and Customers—

RING OUT THE OLD! RING IN THE NEW!

RING IN THE CHRIST THAT IS TO BE

FOR IN THIS XMAS SEASON;

WE HAVE MUCH TO BE GRATEFUL FOR.

This personal message, a sensible expression of good will shall linger with you during the rush of today; a hand of friendship outstretched in loneliness or sorrow; then let us in our second year of PEACE agree with the writer in that passage of scripture when he says "FOR UNTO YOU A CHILD IS GIVEN, AND HIS NAME SHALL BE CALLED WONDERFUL COUNSELLOR, MIGHTY GOD, EVERLASTING FATHER AND THE PRINCE OF PEACE." May this Christmas bring you Peace, Joy, Happiness and Contentment and wishing you also a Prosperous 1947. We sincerely hope to continue serving you with our usual courtesy. From the MANAGEMENT AND STAFF, United Real Estate Agency, 48 Church Street, Kingston.

E. P. POTTS, Prop.

If I wanted to buy any property in Jamaica I should certainly deal with the United Real Estate Agency, and I should count it an honour to be served personally by Potts, Prop.!

CHAPTER 25



*Hoo-doo? — 1941 Hold Up — Not Meeting Beaver-
brook — Christmas Eve — Atomic Bombs — War
with Mars*

IT seems to be a law of my life that it should never run smoothly for long. Especially on journeys. Thus, in 1941-1942, after a very successful propaganda tour in America (I was sent by our Government to the U.S.A. to bring America into the war, and with a little help from the Japs I succeeded brilliantly!) it took me two months to get from New York to Glasgow. I left New York by *Clipper* on December 21, 1941, looking forward to spending Christmas at home after a three months' absence. The *Clipper* got as far as Bermuda. There the passengers were disembarked—as we were told, for the night. Actually I was marooned there for a fortnight. The waves at the Azores—the next stop on the cross-Atlantic flight—were too high to permit of the *Clipper* coming down there. She had to do the run from Bermuda to Lisbon in one “hop.” This she could only do by jettisoning the passengers and going on only with the mails. After a fortnight I got a passage in a ship—a liner converted into an auxiliary cruiser. This should have got me home in eight days. This ship put into Halifax, Nova Scotia, for stores, for one night. The following morning, going seawards down the channel in a snowstorm, she found herself on the wrong side of one of the buoys marking the course. The Captain backed her with a view to then going ahead on the right side of the buoy. The ship, going backwards, ran on to a ledge of submerged rock. For hours she crashed up and down on that rock, knocking a great hole in her bottom. Finally she was ignominiously towed back to Halifax and I was dumped, so to speak, on the beach. The next ship I got into, a fortnight later, which had been laid up for many years and then dug out to be fitted up as a troopship, sat eight days in Halifax Harbour preparing to start the voyage. This ship practically fell to bits while

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we waited on her, and, after eight days of acute misery the four thousand of us who were aboard her were again dumped on the beach. Another fortnight, and I got a third ship. This caught fire in mid Atlantic, about twenty feet from the fore magazine! And we were ordered to stand by the boats. The fire was eventually got under, and we caught up with the convoy, finally reaching the Clyde without further mishap. Two months that little trip from New York to Scotland took me. . . .

Now the hoo-doo seems to be working again. It is Christmas day. Yesterday the message from Lord Beaverbrook did not come through. The lines from Miami over which the message must come were hopelessly over-congested, and in any case were open only till two p.m. Again and again, waiting in the Myrtle Bank Hotel, we were told that the message would be coming through in a "few minutes." But it didn't. Mr. Litchfield, the secretary, and I, huddled together in conference as to what to do. If we flew to Nassau on Christmas Day and Boxing Day, we might find, when we got there, that his Lordship was on the point of returning. If we didn't, we might wait days in Jamaica while he stayed on in Nassau. When he intended to return the Lord only knew, and he wouldn't or couldn't—tell. We resolved, since telephonic communication appeared to be out of the question, over Christmas and Boxing day, to wire him, and then to go to his house at Montego Bay. So I sent him a wire beginning, "I am in Jamaica—Where should I be . . .?" and telling him what we were doing. Then in a new Chrysler—(£600 cost—Lord, what will happen to our motor industry if tariffs go!)—we set off on the 120 mile journey to Montego Bay.

This involved crossing the island from south to north, and then proceeding by the coastal road to the north-west of the island. It had been a market day in Kingston, and for miles from the city the road was studded with traffic returning homewards. There were donkeys and mules laden with panniers on either flank, with two or three negroes walking behind. There were lorries laden with goods, and with half a dozen negroes sitting on the tail-boards. There were groups of negroes, men and women and children, walking the hot road, with baskets balanced, apparently effortlessly, on their heads. There were buses packed with negro folk—packed as I have never seen buses packed in England, even in the worst conditions of war-time. For miles we threaded our way through this procession. Our driver, a big negro, kept his

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horn going continually. It was a high-pitched and violent horn. It made conversation in the car quite impossible, and outraged my nervous system every two or three seconds.

The road led upwards into the mountains, and there for two and a half hours, it stayed. It bent and twisted continually to take advantage of the lie of the land. In all the sixty miles or so from South to North of the Island, there was not a straight stretch of more than a hundred yards or thereabouts. And at every twist and turn, our driver sounded that wretched horn. From time to time we passed through negro villages. The housing conditions were squalid in the extreme, the houses being no more than wooden sheds. They looked as if they had survived from the days of slavery—and as if they hadn't been painted once ever since. The negro population of Jamaica, I soon concluded, lived—when not working—upon the streets, and in the middle of the road at that! Every village had poured its population on to the road, where it stood talking and laughing and taking not the slightest notice of traffic until the buffer of the car was practically butting their bottoms!

We had resolved to break the journey at Dry Harbour some seventy miles from Kingston, at the house of Mr. Blagrove—the brother-in-law of Mrs. Blagrove, and uncle to Lady Mary Twysden—to which Mrs. Blagrove and her daughter had gone, as we thought, earlier in the day, and where they were to stay. We arrived at seven-thirty p.m. only to find that they had not yet arrived. Mary's face when she and her mother arrived a quarter of an hour later and saw me standing on the verandah, was a study in surprise.

Mr. Blagrove is one of a family which has lived on this estate since the days of Cromwell. The original Blagrove was one of the regicides of Charles I, and Cromwell gave him a big grant of land in Jamaica, which has stayed in the possession of the family ever since. But the house in which Mr. Blagrove lives is one which he built for himself. Magnificently situated on high ground overlooking the sea a mile or so away, everything of which it is built has come from the estate on which it stands—the stone, the timber, everything. It is a beautiful house, surrounded by a three-sided balcony, roofed over, but open to the air and liberally supplied with the rocking-chairs one associates with the "deep south" in America. We sat there for a while, drinking and smoking in the cool of the evening and watching the fire-flies adorning

the ceiling with little pin-points of light, and then went into the dining-room. This was lit by candles in big glass containers. The deep mahogany-coloured polished wood of the floor, the beautiful large mahogany table, the big mahogany sideboard, the exquisite silver on the table, gleamed under the soft light. Negro servants waited at table. One had a momentary vision of a way of life which had gone on for three hundred years, and which was not substantially changed by the abolition of slavery, a way of life, ordered and leisurely and gracious for the planters, and not, except with bad planters, unduly oppressive for the slaves, at any rate the domestic slaves.

But we were still far from Montego Bay, and at ten p.m. with warm wishes for a Happy Christmas ringing in our ears, we drank a thumbleful of a liqueur made from pimento, a local fruit, and once again took the road. This road running along the northern coast of the island on the flat, was comparatively straight, and towards midnight we turned in to "Cromarty," Lord Beaverbrook's house, some three miles or so from the little town of Montego.

Arnold, a young negro of about twenty-five or so, who acts as the butler, was waiting up for us, and gave us a final drink before we went—a little wearily in my case, for I had begun the day by swimming about five-thirty a.m.—to bed.

And now, as I write, it is Christmas Day. I am sitting under a verandah supported by stone pillars. The house stands on the slope of a hill. Before me is a long avenue of "King-palms" running down to the low ground which separates this hill from the high ground, tree covered, opposite. On the low ground of the valley, are fields of sugar-canes. To my left a mile away, is the sea—a stretch of indigo-blue with a pale blue sky, flecked with occasional white clouds above it. The shore is fringed with palms. On the sea, near the shore, are two three-masted brigs. The sun shines, but a steady breeze keeps me cool as I write. A great vulture circles the valley at a height of about sixty feet, its wings outstretched, searching the ground for any movement which would reveal the presence of prey.

I awoke this morning to a low repeated knocking at my bedroom door. It was Arnold, with a pot of tea, and "a Happy Christmas, Sah!" I returned his greeting, and lay under the mosquito netting of my canopied bed, drinking that beverage without which I cannot face the day. When I rose I found that

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Arnold, the previous night, had unpacked every single bit of my baggage and stowed it away in the big wardrobe. He had removed everything from the pockets of all my clothing, even the overcoats, and all was ready to hand. In England I live very simply—mostly in a single-roomed flat—but as I went into the adjoining bathroom and turned on my bath I momentarily revelled in a sense of luxury and ease.

Downstairs I breakfasted on orange, grape-fruit and banana and bacon and eggs, and then took a look at the house. It is not a big house as houses go here. A small library, a big lounge, a dining-room, and a drawing-room comprise the ground floor and there are four or five bedrooms on the floor above. But it is perfectly appointed and beautifully kept. All that is missing is my host. It seems that while here he caught a chill and insisted on getting up and about before he was really fit for it. Now there is an ominous spot on one of his lungs and his temperature wobbles about rather badly. He blamed the climate here—quite unjustly—and fled to Nassau, but omitted to notify me and adjust arrangements for our meeting until the holiday-season telephonic rush made communication impossible.

Well, as the motto on the stone at Totnes says—“*J'y suis. J'y reste!*” “Here I am and here I remain”—until something happens. Meantime I learn that Sir William Wiseman and his wife—who were very kind to me in New York when I was there in 1941 are staying nearby with Sir William Stephenson. We are to have our Christmas dinner with them.

As for the “hoo-doo,” it will either lift or it will remain. If it is to lift, there is no need to do anything about it. If it isn't, there is nothing one *can* do about it anyway, as the negroes of Jamaica very well know.

It is noon—or five p.m. in England. There, my friends will be just about recovering from the torpor induced by Christmas dinner over-eating. I think of them affectionately, and a little wistfully. But the blue of this blue, blue ocean beckons. I will go and have a bathe.

It seems to be a law of life that internal cohesion is only achieved by external pressure.

When a man is having a row with his wife the one sure way to stop the row is for a third party to butt in. Then both the contending parties will turn on the interloper with utter ferocity and

their own quarrel will be completely forgotten in resentment at this interference from without.

A Trade Union may be rent with internal dissensions and jealousies so much so as apparently to preclude any hope of united action on its part. Let the employer, however, utilize the occasion to propose a reduction in wages and, in an instant, the internal jealousies are put on one side, sworn enemies become blood brothers, and a militant, almost an exultant, unity will replace the previous dissensions!

So with a country. It may be riven by class antagonisms or split with religious or political feuds. But if at such a moment some foreign power should conceive that this is the opportunity it has long awaited, and declare war, then overnight national unity will supersede the class, political, or religious feuds, "God Save the King" will replace the Red Flag, Tories and Communists—(well, perhaps not the Communists: it depends on the orders from Moscow)—Tories and Socialists will embrace each other, all partisan quarrels forgotten in the upsurge of enthusiasm for teaching the opposing nation where it gets off.

Unfortunately for the third example I have quoted, all wars—whether won or lost—hopelessly impoverish the combatant nations. This exacerbates internal divisions within them once the danger from without is past. And so all over Europe to-day and in America, the class struggle has been resumed with greater intensity than ever. And it is no good proclaiming the truth that whichever side wins everybody is going to be a lot worse off. When the Right wins, Fascism establishes itself. When the Left wins the Communist Police State emerges.

Moreover, as between nations, wars raise more problems than they solve. The last war has destroyed a German hegemony of Europe only to replace it by a Russian one. It "saved the Empire" only at the cost of leaving us too poor and too weak to hold it together: so that it is now in process of being surrendered. It has precipitated a new power distribution in the world which has thrown up more different and apparently insoluble problems than existed in 1939. And so nations which were lately Allies are looking darkly at each other, snarling and barking, and keeping their swords loose in their scabbards against the possible eventualities of to-morrow.

But now the consequences of conflict—internal and inter-

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national—are vastly worse than at any previous time. Liberals could beat the Conservatives and Conservatives beat the Liberals in time past without anything frightfully shattering resulting. But to-day, if Right beats Left or Left beats Right then—to use Hitler's amiable and picturesque phrase—"heads will roll." For each side promptly liquidates or immobilizes its political opponents, by the weapons of judicial murder or the concentration camp. Political opponents become "class enemies" or "enemies of the State"—and then it's all up with them.

And if international war should come, there is the new and appalling weapon of the atom bomb. And the atom bomb of the future will be incomparably more destructive than the one which, on the instant, wiped out a hundred thousand people at Hiroshima. That was an immature, almost an amateur, affair. We've progressed a lot since then!

And yet for all the abounding evidence that civil strife ends only in tyranny and that international strife will probably end in the annihilation of the patient earth that bears us upon its breast, internal politics of the various countries, and the international conferences of statesmen, alike suggest that we are hell bent upon doom.

What then can save us? What we need—little ones!—is a declaration of war by Mars upon the earth. Once the ultimatum from Mars reaches the Earth, everything will be transformed in the twinkling of an eye.

Winston will cease to be, in Russian eyes, an "Imperialistic and Fascist Beast," and become again the heaven-inspired defender of the liberties of Earth in its struggle with the malevolent Martians. Stalin will cease to be "the bloody-minded successor of the Czars," and again embody the fighting spirit of our noble Allies, the Russians. The Americans will cease to be "those damned Yankees" to us, and we shall cease to be "those artful British" to them. All will be harmony in action.

Complaints about Stalin's keeping five million Russians mobilized will give place to admiration for his foresight in so doing. Russian alarm about the atomic bomb will give place to hearty admiration of that wonderful weapon. The Germans will awake from the stupor of defeat, and jump at the chance of retrieving past shames by future glory. "My own Lilli Marlene"

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will rank as a marching song in the Allied armies with the "Marseillaise."

No one will try to keep anybody else from affiliating to U.N.O.—which will at once become a world reality. Even Franco will be regarded as "at any rate 'an Earth-man.'"

Internally, we shall stop nationalizing things and at once start running them! The burden of taxation will be uncomplainingly borne, and overtime will become popular again! The fighting spirit of the Home Guard will animate the whole of Earth!

As the news of successful resistance to the Martians begins to come through from different parts of the globe, the Press of the different countries, so lately at odds one with another, would abound in complimentary references to each others' doings. The Russian Press would ring with praise of American exploits. The German Press would extol the doings of "these wonderful Frenchmen." The British would wax warm in praise of the fighting qualities of the "Belsen Guards"—reorganized for war and this time directed against the proper enemy.

But—you object—there is no ultimatum from Mars, no inter-planetary declaration of war. That, however, is not really necessary! All that is necessary is that the nations should believe that there is. Surely Governments, which can do so much, could easily contrive a little matter like this!

CHAPTER 26



Christmas Day

LAST night Litchfield (Lord Beaverbrook's secretary) and I dined at the house of Sir William Stephenson. This lies very high up on the mountain tops overlooking Montego Bay. It is approached by a stony roadway which rises so steeply and for so long as to be a strain on any motor car. Our little Standard was in bottom gear most of the way up.

It was a very jolly dinner party, this Christmas Day. Besides Sir William and his chubby American wife, there was Sir William Wiseman (who had been so kind to me in New York and who hailed me with great enthusiasm) and his wife, much younger than he. Then there was a guest who looked as if he had stepped straight out of a film, and a Mr. Loudon, who, I gathered, made films, but didn't look at all like it. Then there was Mr. Head, an architect, and his attractive Czech wife. And another American lady. So we were quite a considerable party.

The house, besides being beautifully situated with as lovely a view from its verandah as any house in all the world, was exquisitely furnished, the drawing-room with white and saffron carpets, and furniture coverings almost taking one's breath away.

Litchfield told Stephenson of his efforts to get him on the 'phone this morning, and of how the negro butler had said that "Sir William would be heavily engaged for one hour." Litchfield had asked how, and the butler had replied with great dignity: "Sir William is engaged in the distribution of presents to the poor and needy." There had in fact been quite a celebration at the house. Stephenson, who is rich, had had made up a parcel of food for the adult negroes thereabouts and toys for the piccaninnies. Sir William Wiseman had made a Christmassy speech to the gathering, and then the negroes had danced and capered about with joy. They seem to be a very happy lot. Intellectually they are all children, and very slow in everything they do. But

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they are very cheerful, and usually bear the broadest of grins. At Christmas they have a few days' holiday which they spend in singing and dancing, which they do with great abandon.

The hospitality of the Stephensons matched the splendour of their house. Indeed, I am still suffering from it to-day! Every kind of drink was available and the dinner was a poem. Then about 10.30 p.m. we tumbled into motor cars and drove down to the sea and danced at the Casa Blanca in Montego Bay. This is a combination of hotel, restaurant, dance-hall, and bathing station—on the edge of the shore. The dance floor is covered, but the seating accommodation is out of doors. There we sat under a crescent moon and a sky full of stars, and talked the nonsense and badinage proper to such an occasion and danced sometimes, and listened to the negro singers and the band, till after midnight.

This morning I wrote an article for the *Evening Standard*, typed it out, and arranged for it to go to New York for cabling to England. And then, around noon, Litchfield and I went down to the Casa Blanca for a swim. The beach here is of sand, and the sea under the bright sunshine was a symphony in different shades of blue. It is extremely salt here, and it is almost impossible to sink. In this water one may swim or float lazily for an hour at a time.

When I went out into the water I found myself near an attractive coffee-coloured maiden, who gave me a broad and encouraging smile and a happy "good morning." I returned both, reflecting that, middle-aged as I am, the old charm still appeared to work! But I deceived myself! This little lady was not regarding me as a potential lover, but as a potential customer. She runs a little typing bureau in Montego, and approaches all the visiting notabilities for typing commissions. She had, she told me with pride, typed for Lady Megan Lloyd George, of whom she has a photo on her desk. She was now doing some work for Phyllis Bottome. Could she do any for me? The bathing beach is the great contacting place for customers. The arrival of all notabilities is reported in the local Press, usually with photographs. She studies these, and, since everybody comes to the beach, it is then she "nobbles" them, so to speak.

No word yet from Beaverbrook in reply to my wire! Litchfield and I speculate on what is happening at Nassau. It is utterly unlike Beaverbrook not to reply to a cable *instantly*, and to me

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he is always courtesy personified. Has my cable reached him? Even if it hadn't, he would by now be making the most energetic inquiries of Litchfield as to what had happened to me. Is he ill? Has that "patch" on the lung got active again and has he (as he hinted to Litchfield he might do if he didn't get better) gone off to Toronto to the hospital there. Has he been swept up into some Christmas holiday party? We don't know. The telephone to Miami, through which calls for Nassau have to go, has broken down. The telegraph is the only means of communicating quickly; and no telegram comes from him.

With anybody but Beaverbrook I would get a bit huffy about things, for I have travelled for two weeks on his invitation to spend this Parliamentary vacation with him. But I am sure there must be a reasonable explanation. I only hope that it is not that he is seriously ill.

I hear that Captain Gammans and his wife have arrived in Montego Bay. I thought he was going to stay with His Excellency in Kingston, but it looks as if there has been some hitch in his arrangements, too.

Apart from anxiety about Beaverbrook I am quite content to stay here. The climate is heavenly, the bathing superb, I have a beautifully appointed house at my disposal, and a staff of servants to look after me. The food is excellent. And I have leisure to write. But I miss my old friend, and wish I knew what the devil was happening to him.

CHAPTER 27



News of Beaverbrook — In Search of Dollars — The American-Jamaican Problems

WORD has at last come through from Lord Beaverbrook. He is in hospital in Miami. His removal from Nassau to Miami explains the delay in replying to my cable, which followed him along there. He says he is "bad," but his voice sounded as resonant as ever, and I hope he isn't really bad. He wants me and Litchfield to go to him there. But dollars are short so will I get some from London. Surely—if I can.

We go first to the bank manager, and explain my need. In London I am entitled to ask for £75 worth of dollars. Will he cable to my bank there and ask them to wire me the dollars? The bank manager looks lugubrious. I may be entitled to dollars in London, but dollars can only be issued to me here by the authority of some finance board in Kingston. All right, how long will it take to get their approval? The manager does not suppose they will give approval. Why not? I am entitled to the dollars in London. Why not here? Because currency regulations differ, and I am not a resident of Jamaica. Well, how long will it take to try to get approval? Well, nothing much could be done this week, as it is holiday week, and things won't really get going till next week. Then it will take some days!

The whole bearing of this manager depressed me, and I resolved to borrow some dollars—improperly—from one of my American friends here, for laws were made for man, not man for laws. But Litchfield suggests we try the bank next door. We found the manager there a cheery contrast to the chap we had left. He took us into his office, sat us down, offered me a cigar, and asked how he could serve us. Certainly I could wire to my London bank. Certainly they could wire me the dollars! Sanction was necessary from Kingston for their issue, but that could be fixed up on the telephone! I wrote out the cable on the spot, which he

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arranged to dispatch. Within an hour he had telephoned that the Kingston approval was O.K., and I could have the dollars just as soon as my London bank replied to my cable.

Before this little *contetemps* over the matter of dollars we had been down to the beach for a swim. There I found Captain and Mrs. Gammans who, it seems, are staying for a few days with Major Nathan. Nathan is the proprietor of the big "Nathan's Stores" at Kingston, which also has a branch here in Montego. After our swim we met Major Nathan, who wanted, he said, to talk to me about the state of Jamaica. Would Litchfield and I dine with him to-night, after we had had cocktails at the Stephenson's? We would.

At 5.30 p.m. we drove along the coast and up the precipitous stony road to Sir William Stephenson's house. The other night it was dark when we arrived. Now it was still light, and I could get the magnificent view of the bay which the house commands before it, and the view of the mountain tops on either hand. This house stands 1,100 feet above sea level, and I will swear that no house in the world has a lovelier view than this. Up there, however hot it is down in the bay, it is always refreshingly cool. The mosquitoes, which are a bit of a nuisance down below, cease to trouble at this altitude. A cool freshness, as of early dawn, pervades the air.

There was quite a company assembled for cocktails. All the folk we had met at dinner on Christmas Day were there, and many new folk as well, including a planter of the sixth generation, who brought with him a surprising number of daughters.

Willie Wiseman talks to me about Anglo-American relations. He is on Wall Street, and knows and likes the Americans very well. He says we handle them quite wrongly. They are a child-like race, very adolescent, generous, easily hurt, and quick to detect whether an Englishman really likes them or not. We ought to drop all the sentiment about our common backgrounds, our common Shakespeare, our common language, and all the rest of the stuff talked by the "Pilgrims" and other Anglo-American bodies. Above all we must not condescend to them. They are swift to detect condescension, and equally swift to resent it. But if they like you, you can talk as bluntly as you will and they will not resent it. The line to take with them is to say "Look here, you guys, we don't particularly like you, and you don't

particularly like us. But it is no more necessary that you should, than that you should like the manager of your insurance company. Anglo-American relations are a matter of insurance—mutual insurance. So let's agree that we are a lot of bastards, and you a lot of so-and-so's, and get down to business." We'd do better on that line than in handing out what the Americans call "the bunk."

I remind him of Culbertson's analysis of the "American" mind. Culbertson (half Scotch and half Russian and extremely shrewd) told me that there were two strains in the American make-up. One strain was a real and sincere idealism, which can be harnessed to any worthy cause, and which is capable of great and generous action. The other is a strong strain of scepticism and hard business dealing. Like the man from Missouri, they have to be "shown." This strain doesn't resent hard bargaining and tough dealing. The problem of Anglo-American relations is to deal simultaneously with both these strains. And it can be done only on the basis of utter genuineness. Halifax was a complete failure in the States. He did his best to accommodate himself to the Americans, but you could hear the machinery creaking all the time. And so could the Americans.

Of all the English who went to the States during the war to try to improve Anglo-American relations, Wiseman thought I did best. "They liked you," he said. "You were direct and blunt. You didn't pull any punches. And you had a broad grin on most of the time." He urges me to go to the States again, where he will entertain me, and arrange for me to see anybody I want to see.

I met the son of the proprietor of the *Jamaica Gleaner* and teased him about the advertisements in the paper, and about to-day's description of me as "a smiling medium-sized statesman"—which tickles me to death. The sixth generation planter, who owns big sugar-cane plantations hereabouts, tells me how he feels ashamed of the plenty prevailing here by contrast with the thin time the folk at home are having. "Here," he said, "we never really felt the war; and it's a damned shame that after all they went through at home they should still be suffering such shortages." And indeed it is.

The guests formed into little groups, broke up, and formed again, as is the way with cocktail parties the world over. Then someone turned on the radio, and soon we were dancing under

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the stars on a smooth-tiled floor surrounded by white trellis-work bearing masses of flowers. It was all very delightful.

Then Litchfield and I go down lower on the hillside to dine with Major Nathan and the Gammans'. Nathan is troubled about the future of Jamaica. The Panama disease—so far incurable—has hit the banana plants. Production is down from twenty-eight million stems to six million stems. It will probably not go beyond nine millions. The great thing is to develop alternative industries. Sugar is one. But here the great need is for a stable price-level and a guaranteed market—the cry of the farmer the world over. Citrus fruits will help. And the island could produce a fine tomato crop. He is very anxious that I should understand their situation here and offers to bring to me anyone I want to get information from. We arrange that a little group should get together after swimming to-morrow.

And so, under the star-spangled night sky, we drive home to "Cromarty," with a gracious evening added to the storehouse of memory, and the assurance of bright sunshine to-morrow.

CHAPTER 28



Alligator Hunt

WHEN I was a little boy, I suppose of eight or nine, I killed a robin. I was a straight shot with a stone then, and when I saw the robin perched on a bush some thirty feet away, I yielded to the huntsman's instinct, and threw. A few seconds later, and that little red-breasted, bright-eyed bundle of life was lying limply in my hand, its warm body broken, and its bright eyes glazing rapidly in death. For days afterwards I felt like a murderer, and from that time onwards developed a pathological horror of killing any form of bird life. For some reason which I do not understand this hatred of killing did not extend to fish. I can take a day's fishing without remorse for the fish which—very occasionally!—I catch.

When it was proposed that yesterday we should join a small party to go alligator-hunting on the River Caboretto, a momentary doubt assailed me as to the ethics of killing alligators. But mentally I classified alligators with the fish form of life, decided that I didn't like alligators anyway, and agreed to join the party.

There were five of us in the party—Mr. Loudon, Lady Wiseman, Mrs. Flanagan, Mr. Litchfield, and me. We started early in the morning, for the place of operations was some thirty miles away. A 1928 Cadillac of immense dimensions carried the lot of us. A Mr. Cook, who looked the part of big-game hunter to the life, was in charge of the party. He wore a topee, an open-necked shirt, khaki trousers, crocodile-skin shoes, a rifle and a shotgun, and succeeded in looking positively lethal. In the coolness of early morning we drove up into the hills, rejoicing in the breeze we felt in the open car. The road was through country of surpassing beauty, but here beauty is everywhere once one is away from the towns, and so it is taken for granted. Conversation ran on alligators—alligators caught by Mr. Cook

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on many earlier expeditions, and alligators which we, doubtless, would catch this day. You caught your alligator, it seemed. You skinned its belly. You dried the skin, and took it back to England, duty free. And with it you made an enormous impression on the lady of your heart. If possible, you were photographed at the moment of dramatic action, when your rifle was pouring lead into the body of the reptile, and after the kill, when you stood with your foot on the prostrate corpse. Or so it seemed.

After a drive of an hour or so, we stopped at a bridge over a little stream—not the Caboretto, but a tributary thereof. On the bridge stood a number of Negroes and Indians. Not Red Indians, but brown Indians, descendants of the indentured, coolie labourers imported into Jamaica by the planters as the next cheapest substitute for slaves after the slaves were free. There were also half a dozen Negro and Indian children, alike in colour, but very different in feature and in their hair. The men reported to us that an alligator had been seen just below the bridge. It was still lying there, and they pointed with eager fingers to the spot where they said it was. "Good," thought I. "We shall see action without delay." So thought Mr. Loudon, who grabbed a rifle, went a short distance down the bank and fired into the water. So thought Mr. Cook, who being a more experienced slayer of alligators, did not trouble to go down the bank, but fired from the bridge.

At this point one of two things should have happened. If the alligator had been killed, he should have turned belly-upwards and floated downstream. If he had only been wounded, he should have thrashed the water into foam with his agonized writhings. Neither happened. In fact, nothing happened. The stream flowed as placidly as before. "Ah! Concussed!" said Mr. Cook. But concussed or not, some sign of the alligator should have appeared. It did not. The wretched reptile was not living up to form at all, and after gazing fruitlessly at the stream for some time, we gave it up. Doubtless the next alligator would really show us something.

Provisions were unloaded from the car and reloaded into a capacious boat. We, the hunting party, also got into the boat, and so did two or three of the Negroes, who were to do the paddling. Another three or four darkies got into a long canoe, which had been hollowed out of the trunk of a tree, and which

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was laden with nets and stakes. In our boat, Mr. Loudon installed himself in the forefront of the bows, sports-gun in hand. Our hunter, Mr. Cook, stood with one foot in the bottom of the boat, and the other on the gunwale, just behind him. He held a rifle at the ready. We carried our armament for'ard, so to speak, and could not doubt that under its powerful protection the rest of us, who sat modestly in the middle and the back of the boat, would be safe from the attack of any alligators, however fierce and however numerous.

We might find alligators in one of three ways. We might find them swimming or lying in the stream. We might find them sunning themselves on the banks. But they might—it was unlikely—have gone to earth under the banks, in those holes and recesses which, Mr. Cook said, they favoured in their retreat. In the third case, we should have to get them out before we could dispose of them. Which seemed reasonable enough. And so our little cavalcade shipped quietly down stream the Negro paddlers making as little noise as possible in order not to forewarn our predestined prey of what was coming to them. The sun, now become quite hot, shone down upon us. The canes and shrubs by the river banks rustled in the breeze. A variety of bird and insect life skimmed the surface of the placidly flowing water. All nerves were tense with the hazards of the coming conflict. . . .

But there appeared to be a conspicuous absence of the alligators we had come to hunt. None lifted ominous snouts and beady, merciless eyes above the surface of the stream. None lay basking in the sunshine on banks at bends in the stream. What made this the more surprising was that the day was a Sunday, so that they could hardly be working away at some spot far from home. After about half an hour thus fruitlessly spent, our hunter, Mr. Cook, reached the conclusion that they must be hiding beneath the overhanging banks of the river. We should have to dig them out. He selected a spot where, he said, an alligator—"about nine foot long"—was known to make his habitat. The boats drew into the bank, and the coloured folk got busy. After some preliminary poking about under the bank with long staves the entrance to the lair was established. The coloured folk went ashore and opened up a little canal into the entrance about three feet long. Then they drove a number of stakes into the river bed at the mouth of the entrance, making a sort of palisade which would prevent the alligator from getting out of his lair into the river.

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Then at the inner end of the little three-foot canal a noose of rope was dropped into the water. It had a running slip-knot, into which the alligator, who is a stupid creature, anyway, would thrust his snout when he was forced to attempt to leave his lair. The slip-knot would then be pulled tight, and we should catch him alive. If, however, he proved a tough customer—for it seems that some alligators refuse to “come quiet”—the rifle and the shotgun would be there to dispatch him as necessary.

Then the coloured folk drew a kind of semi-circle about the entrance to the lair. The land was only land in a superficial sense. The muddy crust was only a few inches deep. Below the crust was water. In that water lurked the alligator, who had to be smoked out, or more precisely poked out, from his cowardly retreat. Working from the circumference of this semi-circle inwards towards the entrance, the coloured boys then began systematically to thrust their stakes, every few inches, through the crust of earth into the water underneath. Sooner or later one of them would poke the crocodile, who, being thus rudely disturbed in his inner sanctum, would seek to make his way through the narrow entrance into the open river. Only he would never reach the open river. He would be caught by our cunningly contrived noose, or the guns would get him, and in a few weeks various ladies in London would be presented with crocodile-skin handbags!

While the boys poked and poked, Mr. Cook stood, with one foot still on the gunwale, and an expression of tense concentration on his honest and rugged countenance, pointing his gun at that little canal, waiting for the rise in the level of the water which would give warning that the alligator was pushing his way out. Loudon covered him with his shotgun, and the light of battle shone in his bright blue eyes. The rest of us sat with eyes glued to the spot at which the trouble would begin. We said nothing, but we were privately resolved to get out of that boat with lightning celerity if—which we did not expect—our triple line of defence, the noose, the rifle, and the shotgun, should be penetrated by a more than usually determined and fierce reptile. The risk was not really great, for Mr. Cook had assured us that in all the expeditions he had led, no human being had ever been killed or injured. Still, you never knew, and a line of retreat is always a desirable thing to have all ready worked out. . . .

The Negroes and Indians kept on industriously poking their

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stakes through the crust of the earth. They were encouraged from time to time by Mr. Cook, who in the dialect of Jamaica, urged the boys to "Cum arn, man, get dat old genleman out o' dere! Get him out, boys!" The sun kept on shining. We kept on keeping watch and ward. Everybody played his part nobly—everybody, that is, except the alligator!

Subjected to all this poking one might have expected that the alligator might have imitated the spirit of Caesar, which, you will remember, rushed out of his body to "inquire whether Brutus so unkindly knocked or no." But our alligator was not cast in the Caesarian mould. Like Brer Rabbit, "he lay low and said nothin'." If he was at home, he was not going to be disturbed on the Sabbath by unwanted visitors. Maybe he had his wife with him, and wanted "five minutes more, just five minutes more, in her arms." Who can tell what moves in the mind of an alligator on a Sunday forenoon?

After about an hour of this, during which the alligator, if he was there, must have been well and truly poked in every part of his horny anatomy, Mr. Cook came to the conclusion that the alligator was not there. I found it impossible to dissent from this conclusion, for if I had been the alligator, I would not have been there myself, with all that poking!

We had now been unlucky with two alligators. But the "third time pays for all," as they say in the Midlands; "third time fair," as they say in Kent; and it is well known, since the days of Bruce, that if at first you don't succeed you should try, try, and try again. We gathered in the men and the stakes, and with Mr. Cook and his rifle still vigilantly guarding us, we moved further downstream. After a while Mr. Cook saw under the bank on one side of the stream some muddy water. True the water of the river was generally muddy. But this patch was muddier than the rest. It had plainly been disturbed, and what could have disturbed it but an alligator. The lust of the chase awoke anew in our breasts!

This time, however, we varied the plan of attack. The muddy water was in a little bay of the bank. Across the mouth of this little bay the coloured folk stretched a net, which they pinned with stakes to the river bed. Then on land they drew the now familiar half-circle, and began poking all over again. When the alligator should be driven out from his lair he would find himself entangled in this net, and then the rest would be easy.

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The sun grew hotter and hotter. In this bend of the river we were denied the benefit of the grateful breeze we had had earlier on. The women began to wilt slightly. However, a draught of rum and water and a sandwich or two revived their drooping spirits, and we were all in reasonably good condition again, and ready for Brother Alligator should he appear.

It would be nice to be able to record that the copy-book maxims of one's schooldays again proved their reliability. But this is a strictly truthful narrative. The coloured boys poked and poked. Mr. Cook kept guard, his rifle still at the ready, like anything. But no alligator brightened our eyes with his scaly presence. And so after another hour or so, Mr. Cook decided, no one dissenting, that we should make our way to the main stream, the Caboretto. This, however, was a matter of some difficulty, for our little tributary, which according to the normal habits of tributaries should have become bigger and wider as it approached the parent stream, grew instead narrower and narrower, until we were having to propel the boat through the surrounding rushes and canes by catching hold of the rushes and literally pulling it along. Now we were hemmed in on both sides. The sun was hotter than ever before, and not a breath of air came to temper its violent embrace. Just before we reached the river, Mr. Loudon, whose lust to kill had now remained unslaked for three whole hours, saw a perfectly harmless and very beautiful bird flying above the river, and not to be restrained any longer, let loose both barrels of his sports-gun at it. The broad idea, I gather, was that if the ladies could not have a crocodile-skin bag, they should at least have some feathers for their hats. This consolation, however, was also to be denied them; for Mr. Loudon missed, and the bird swooped over us again to exchange a solemn wink with me as it passed.

At long last, hot, tired, but triumphant, we reached the main stream, at a point about a mile or so from the river mouth and the sea. It was a fine river, and I could see no reason why any alligator, however temperamental, and however conscious of what was due to it, should have any quarrel with this river, or refuse to live in it. Guns were again at the ready and hearts beat high with long-deferred hope. Now, surely, we should at last meet our prey. But no. And again no. We traversed that mile of river without seeing so much as a flicker of an alligator, and came at last upon the sea.

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Man is nothing if not adaptable. If the contemptible cowardly alligators would not come out and meet us; if, like Wellington's recruits, "the damned scoundrels wanted to live for ever," we would turn our attention to the sharks. Mr. Loudon had, as part of his equipment, a perfectly good spear, of the most modern and scientific kind, for spearing fish, which we had not seen fit to waste on the minnows which we had alone seen in the way of fish on the river, although, Mr. Cook said, big tarpon abounded in "them thar" waters. But first we would have lunch. So we landed on a spit of sandy shore, had the grub unloaded from the boat, and sat down in two groups, the hunters in one group and the coloured "boys" in another, to recoup the energies spent so recklessly in alligator hunting!

I do not recall at what precise stage of the meal it suddenly seemed to me that there was a certain quality of mobility about the earth at that spot. It was not so much that something abruptly moved, as that one became gradually conscious of a general crawling movement all around. We had taken a little rum and water to wash down the hard-boiled eggs and sandwiches; but nothing like enough to account for a universal quality of movement in the soil itself. I looked a little more closely at this strange phenomenon. The soil consisted practically wholly of crabs in differently shaped shells which they carried on their backs! I picked one up. "What's this?" I asked. "They call it a soldier crab," I was told. I picked up one in a quite different-coloured shell, and asked what that was. "The same—a soldier crab." I observed that it seemed to belong to a very different regiment! Then it was explained to me. The shells are the shells of long-dead forms of life. The soldier crab selects an empty shell and makes it his home. This accounts for the wide variety in the appearance of the soldier crabs. They are, so to speak, the "Squatters" of the animal world. And some of them move, as it were, into army huts while others choose flats in Mayfair! But they are all "squatters," and I suspect Communist inspiration behind the movement! However this may be, the feeling was general amongst us that the foundations of society were a bit unstable, and that we had better move on. So we made for the open sea.

We had not been going long when, from the ever-optimistic Mr. Cook came a loud cry of "Shark ahead." Immediately, Mr. Loudon assumed the appearance of a cat who has sighted a rat. He

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sat poised and tense in the bows of our boat, spear held aloft in his right hand, waiting the moment to hurl it into the body of a foe not less fierce and apparently more plentiful than alligators. Slowly we drew near the spot where that suggestive fin cut the surface of the water. We hadn't really come for shark, but we were philosophers and felt with the poet—

It ain't no use to grumble and complain.
Much better smile and let your heart rejoice!
I likes the sun. But if the Lord sends rain,
Well, rain's me choice!

We liked alligators; but if the Lord sent sharks, sharks was our choice. At least the expedition would have one trophy to show. Nearer and nearer we drew. Tenser and tenser we felt. Our breathing became quick and hard.

But yet once again the cup of hope was dashed from our expectant lips. What we saw was no fin. It was a stick of wood of which one end protruded a few inches from the surface of the sea. Lowered were our spirits and lowered was the spear! The expedition's score—bird, beast, and reptile and fish—still stood at nil.

The expedition might well have crashed into mutual recrimination at this stage, but for an unexpected development. We had given the coloured boys—Negroes and Indians—a supply of sandwiches and a bottle of rum for their lunch. This now produced wholly unexpected results. An Indian, who rejoiced in the name of "Sugar," and who sat with three Negroes immediately behind the two ladies of the party, suddenly broke out into song. There was nothing remarkable in that, for as was well known to the Psalmist, "wine maketh glad the heart of man," and rum is not a bad substitute for wine. What was remarkable was the songs he sang. In Britain there is a place for the bawdy song. But for these bawdy songs there would be no place in Britain. They embraced more than the *Ars Amor* of Ovid, and practically covered the whole anatomy of woman, with special reference to her more outstanding physical features.

It was all very regrettable. The women should have been outraged and the men indignant. Neither was either! In fact by common consent this was regarded as the day's brightest feature so far; and "Sugar," sensing the most appreciative audience of his life, became more and more expansive as we bounded over

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the sunlit main. But all good things come to an end—even the repertory of an artist like "Sugar." And as we turned into what we were told was called a "drain," silence again fell upon us. This "drain," which we now entered, was an opening into a mangrove swamp. The opening "drained the swamp," and this accounted for the name, which, if I may say so, and I will say so, and I do say so, was singularly appropriate! "Drain" was in fact precisely the right word. The water was dirty and muddy as in any drain. The smell was not dissimilar. Overhead and about us, mangrove stems twisted themselves into all sorts of grim and fantastic shapes. It was grey, grim, eerie, and sinister in that mangrove swamp, even before we got stuck. After that, when we were jammed between mangrove stems and could not move either forwards or backwards, it became uncanny. What now? we asked. But the resourceful Mr. Cook was not to be either beaten or downcast. The stems of the mangrove by which we were caught grew away from each other, so that if the water had been a few inches higher we should have been able to move. Mr. Cook at once saw the solution. "We will wait for the tide to rise," said he firmly. It was only after a considerable period of time that it dawned upon us that the tide was not rising but falling, and that if we stayed there much longer we might find ourselves perched between the trunks of the mango-trees up in space. Meantime creepy-crawly things crept up tree trunks, things in goosey white and vivid scarlet. As with the soldier crabs, we became conscious of the presence of an alien and horrible life all about us—slimy, repellent and sinister.

So, with some violent effort on the part of the whole company we wrenched ourselves free, and went back to the sea again, with the intention of turning up the next river inland, to a point from which we could summon the car and so make our way homeward. As we turned in to this river it was "Sugar" who, for the last time that day, raised the cry of "alligator." Immediately the indefatigable Mr. Cook fired at the water near the bank. A second or two later he fired again, having—he assured us—seen the belly of the alligator after the first shot. I must say that I think that on this occasion the alligator might have played up a bit to Mr. Cook, who after all had done no damage to alligators all day, but this alligator was as non-co-operative as the rest!

Still, the day was not without its "bag." Half-way up this

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river to the point where we were to disembark, we found a fish-trap made of slats of bamboo wood. It wasn't our trap, and we hadn't laid it. But were we restrained by this? Or rather, was Mr. Loudon restrained by this? Not at all. He hurled the contents of the trap into the boat and most of the fish fell on Lady Wiseman. There is a "crack" amongst Londoners. When something good happens to them they remark: "Well, that's better than a slap in the belly with a wet fish!" This is a phrase which Lady Wiseman will be in a position to corroborate from now on.

At the bridge, a mile or so upstream, we disembarked. It was now about four o'clock in the afternoon. The sun was extremely powerful, and we were very tired with our hunting efforts. A clump of trees promised shade while we waited for the car. We sought shade there. But the same idea appears to have occurred previously to a colony of ants! We dared not sit down for fear of getting ants in our pants.

How shall I finish this historical and authentic record of one of the most adventurous days in my life? We reached the house at which Sir William Stephenson and Sir William Wiseman were staying at about 5.30 p.m. We were an extremely bedraggled-looking company. But the two Williams are the soul of hospitality. Two or three Scotches revived the party. On Mr. Cook the third Scotch had a remarkable effect. He began a circumstantial narrative about a native girl who had been washing clothes in the River Caboretto, when an alligator stole up behind her and seized her in its maw. The part of her anatomy which the alligator seized was specified. It was her rear end. The poor girl has been in hospital ever since, a living testimony to the presence of alligators in this territory.

But I am still sceptical. There is a story about an American Negro who, charged with some serious offence, drew himself up to his full height and said: "*Sah, I denies the allegation—and likewise the alligator.*"

And so do I!

CHAPTER 29



Not Getting Dollars — Frustration v. Compensation — New Year's Eve

IF I had not learnt long ago from experience that what can't be cured must be endured, I should be all "het up" at the position here. It is now a week since I arrived here on Christmas Eve. To-day it is New Year's Eve. And I still haven't seen Max. When there is a hoo-doo on a man, or on a project, Fate will use all sorts of instruments to undo him or the enterprise. It seems to be doing so just now. Its latest instrument is my bank manager in London.

Three days of the week I have been here went in waiting to establish effective communication with Beaverbrook. When we learnt that he was in hospital at Miami Beach and wanted us to go to him there the first thing to do was to get dollars. The manager of the Royal Bank of Canada here telegraphed to my bank in London for them. And they should have arrived yesterday. What actually arrived was not authority to pay me American dollars, but Jamaican pounds, which are as useless for my purpose as English ones! So a sizzling further cable has gone to London in basic English, making plain what was already plain in the first cable, namely that it is United States dollars I want. But meantime another day has passed, and one or more may yet pass before the dollars arrive, if ever they do arrive!

Then Fate will have still two more instruments wherewith to frustrate me. One is the aeroplane company, and the other the shipping company. I can't book a seat in a plane for Miami till the dollars come. When they come I may have to wait two or three days for a seat. If so I shall arrive in Miami about the time I ought to leave here by boat for England—January 7th.

But this is not all. We now learn that the boat may leave before the 7th, and if it does I must be here to catch it. So I can't reckon on being away in Miami beyond January 4th or 5th.

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Shall I get there by then? It seems most improbable, for to-morrow is January 1st.

So, as I say, if I hadn't learnt that it was better to travel hopefully than to arrive, I should be very upset. As it is, I am strangely calm about it. In a universe governed by law there can in the last resort be no such thing as accident. What appears to be accident is designed to serve some purpose not yet disclosed to the view. The last time I was frustrated by a hoo-doo—returning from America in 1942—the long rest I had thrust upon me against my will sent me back to England so fighting fit that I promptly fought a By-Election in a Conservative stronghold and, to everybody's astonishment except my own, won a seat in Parliament. To what will this rest be a prelude? Probably a summons from the King to form a Government!

If so, Gammans shall be Colonial Secretary! For yesterday, during his Parliamentary vacation, in the heat of Jamaica, and in the stuffiness of Kingston, he addressed a meeting of the important folk of Jamaica on the problems confronting this island and its industries, with special reference to Imperial Preference. To-day's *Gleaner* has a full-page report of his speech which ends, for to-day, with the words ("To Be Continued"). It reminds me of an extremely long speech once made at an annual conference of my Union. At its long-awaited end someone got up and proposed that it should be reproduced in the Union journal. Another delegate, who had suffered too much, moved an amendment, to add the words: "*As a serial.*" That, it seems, is how Gammans's speech is going to appear here! To-day the worthy man has gone off to another West Indian island to assess the situation there. One thing is clear. If Imperial Preference goes, the West Indies will be infallibly ruined, or will have to live on a dole supplied by the poor old British taxpayer. I'm glad that I voted against that wretched American Loan, and against underwriting the promises or half-promises which our Government made in order to get it.

While my worthy fellow-Member of Parliament goes speech-making and investigating I live a life of sybaritic ease. Doubtless it would pall after a while, but a little of it is extremely agreeable. A black boy brings me tea in bed. I bath and shave at leisure. Downstairs breakfast awaits. There is an orange already peeled, a grape-fruit, a tangerine, and a glass of fruit juice. Then follows bacon and scrambled egg, and toast made of white bread, with

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honey or marmalade. I eat what I want, and then sit out under the verandah looking over the sunlit valley and the blue sea, and read or write till noon. Then we get out the car and run down to the beach for a swim. Then lunch, with anything up to half a dozen types of vegetables to go with the meat or chicken, and a sweet and coffee. After lunch a siesta. Thereafter a pot of tea in bed. In the evening we dine, either in the house, or at one of the hospitable houses occupied by English or American or Jamaican folk here. Then home, under a tropical night sky. One week of this has done me a lot of good. More than a month of it would demoralize me hopelessly. I am sunburnt and fit, fitter than I've felt for a long time. And I'm a complete convert to the idea of taking one's holiday at midwinter instead of midsummer. This is a lovely break in the long English winter, and it is one I will repeat in subsequent winters if at all possible.

Now it is New Year's Day. We were invited to join a party last night given by Mr. Peter Blagrove. We went first to the Chatham Hotel and dined with them there. Mrs. Blagrove, my follow-passenger on the *Eros*, was looking rested up, and browned by the sun. Lady Mary, her daughter, was looking radiant, a quite different creature from the sad and dispirited girl who boarded the *Eros* at Belfast. I kissed them both warmly, for I have become quite fond of them. And then going into the dining-room, who should I see but two of the three school teachers who were with us aboard ship. So I kissed them, too. After all, it was New Year's Eve, and on such an evening an occasional indiscretion may be permitted even to a middle-aged Parliamentarian. The teachers had had a week in Kingston, were now to have a few days in Montego Bay, and were then to settle down to work in Brownstown. The pair of them had made no arrangements for any New Year's Eve festivities, and I tried, unsuccessfully, to bring them into our party which was to go on to the Casa Blanca to a dance. But our party, it had been arranged, was to join up with the Kerr-Jarretts, and so I had rather guiltily to leave them to spend New Year's Eve alone in a strange hotel. But I arranged to bathe with them on the morrow. At my time of life it doesn't matter very much where one spends New Year's Eve. The illusions of time and space have worn a bit thin. One has become reconciled to the essential loneliness which is a man's fate on earth, whether he be by himself or in a

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crowd of company. And birthdays, feasts, and other prominent items in the calendar matter much less than they used to do. But when one is twenty-five or thereabouts, in a strange hotel in a new land, with three years of exile from home and family ahead, a lonely New Year's Eve can be quite a tragedy. And I wish I could have done better by these two.

At the Casa Blanca, people were still dining when we arrived, and the Kerr-Jarretts had not yet come. Soon, however, the dining tables were cleared from off the dance floor, the Kerr-Jarretts arrived, and our group, with a score of others, sat out in the open air at round tables, listening to the music, talking or joining in the dancing as the mood took us. It was a jolly party, and I thought that Mary was enjoying herself. But after New Year had struck and we had sung Auld Lang Syne, I found her in tears. She had *meant* to enjoy herself, and everybody had been so kind; but many of the tunes had been tunes to which she had danced with him at other New Year Parties, and suddenly the desolating sense of intolerable loss had descended upon her again. I did my best to comfort the child, and indeed got her smiling and apparently cheerful again. But the ache and the pain were only thinly covered. Only time can really help her, poor dear.

At 3 a.m., a very late hour for me, I went home. The others stayed on, as I learnt next day, to 5 a.m. But I grow old, and such parties are not for me.

CHAPTER 30



News of Beaverbrook — Visit to Dryharbour

THIS morning, January 2, 1947, Beaverbrook came through on the telephone. He spoke from a hospital at Miami Beach. I asked anxiously how he was. His voice sounded extremely tired and old, and had lost all its old resonance, as he replied that he was not making the progress he had hoped for. It is his lungs that are the trouble. He was most solicitous about me. Was I being well looked after? Was everything all right? I told him that I was being extremely well looked after and that the only thing that was wrong was that he wasn't here. I told him I hoped to get across to see him, but explained the *contretemps* about dollars, and the difficulty that the sands of time, so far as I was concerned, were running out rapidly. I did not gather any hope that he would be able to get to me for some days. And with only four days to go before I go to Kingston to catch the boat—if it goes on the appointed day and not before, as it may do—I didn't see any prospect of getting to him. He quite understood how I was fixed. He was being well looked after by the hospital people. No, there was nothing we could do to help him.

This conversation at once relieved me and deepened my anxiety. It relieved me to the extent that his warm friendliness indicated that he was not sore at my not having been able to get to him. It deepened my anxiety, for he sounded to me to be really ill. He is liable to sudden fits of panic about the state of his health, and therefore one does not always take it as seriously as he does. But this morning he sounded so tired and dispirited that I thought he must be really bad. He is sixty-seven years of age and at that age any illness can become a grave matter.

Later in the day, however, a guest who had been with him at Miami arrived at "Cromarty," and told us that he was now really on the mend. He had been more or less ill for some weeks. In Nassau he had developed an attack of bronchial pneumonia.

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It was this that had sent him into hospital, where he had in fact been really bad. But though tired and fed up, he was now really recovering, and we need not be anxious. He'd have to stay in hospital for a few more days, and then probably wouldn't be allowed to travel for a bit. But there was now no danger at all. He had told this guest to see about getting "Cromarty" fitted with mosquito screen-netting, which was a very good sign.

Litchfield and I drove to-day to Mr. Peter Blagrove's place at Holywell, Dryharbour. The road we took was the coastal road by which we had come to Montego Bay on my arrival in the island. Then, however, it had been late at night, and one could see little of the surroundings. This road runs for the most part by the very edge of the sea, and is very lovely. On one's left was the blue sea, rising into white breakers some distance from the shore, breakers which spent themselves on palm-studded, sandy beaches. On the right the ground sloped upwards towards the foothills of the mountains inland. From time to time one passed little native villages, composed of very small wooden houses—hardly more than huts. Sometimes the "houses" were no more than thatched structures made of coco-nut trunks, and then they looked very African indeed. We followed this road to Falmouth, some thirty miles away. Then it led inland for a bit but rejoined the sea later, at Dryharbour, another twenty miles or so on. The Blagrove house, at which we had dined on my first night here, but which we had reached in the dark so that we could not see its situation, stands on high ground, a mile or so from the sea, overlooking the bay. It is a fine solid structure, made of local cut stone, and designed for coolness.

Peter Blagrove takes us for a drive round his estates. I say "estates," for he has three large properties here. He grows coco-nuts, sugar cane, and other typical island products, and his properties are very fine ones. He has a brother who owns a neighbouring property. But a year or two ago the hurricane smote his coco-nut trees and destroyed over 90 per cent of them. This appears to have decided him to give up and to go to live in England. And so now the old "Great House" is empty. Very melancholy it was to wander through the rooms of this fine old Jamaican house, and to meditate on all the life which has flowed through it during the three hundred years which this Blagrove's family has owned the estate. And sad to think that that long continuity should now be broken.

CHAPTER 31



The "Unknown People" — Singing with the Mummers — Jamaican Wedding

IN Jamaica the natives take their Christmas very seriously. The fun begins before Christmas Day and it goes on well into the "New Year." During this period what are known as the "Johnny Canoes," are very active. These words "Johnny Canoes" are a corruption, I am told, of the words *Les Gens Inconnues*—the unknown people. They are a group of mummers, wearing masks. They are accompanied by a tom-tom band which, however, admits of a piper or two. They go about the streets performing an elaborate masquerade, the dominant theme of which is the exorcizing of evil spirits. One mummer is dressed up to represent a native hut which the evil spirits are supposed to have invaded. The job of the others is to exorcize the spirit. This is a difficult and complicated business, requiring violent sword dances by other mummers, the playing of tunes by the band—or rather the banging of the tom-toms in furious and involved rhythm, accompanied by the thin wail of a pipe. There are dances, too, in which all the natives around join in, which they do with a gravity and a concentration which suggests a religious ritual rather than a mere dance. This band of mummers goes about the streets, stopping here and there to perform its strange ceremonies, and gathering a crowd of native onlookers and participants wherever it goes. It goes out to villages in the neighbourhood and traverses considerable distances. Until the early hours of the morning the sound of the distant tom-toms carries through the soft night air, and it must be near dawn before they get back to their homes. But they are at it next day with undiminished energy and they appear to keep up the business for ten days or so.

On my last night at Montego Bay the "Johnny Canoes" came to the house of the Stephensons, high up on the top of the hills above the village of Reading, five miles from Montego. This

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house, the most lovely in its setting of all the lovely houses I saw in Jamaica, has a big terrace by its side smoothly tiled and surrounded by a low wall. Here come the "Johnny Canoes," accompanied by approximately a hundred natives, men, women and children, who had gathered together from villages and hamlets in the neighbourhood. For an hour or more they entertained us as we sat—Sir William Stephenson and his wife, Sir William Wiseman and his wife, Mrs. Flanagan and Mrs. Hodder-Williams, Litchfield, and, of course, me. With portentous solemnity the masked exorcizers circled round the symbolic hut. With ferocious energy the sword dancers struck sparks from each others' swords. The tom-tom players, huddled closely together, twisted their bodies and threw their heads about in some wild ecstasy of ferocious rhythm which was *hypnotic in its repetitive effect*. But what fascinated me most was the ordinary men, women, and children who joined in the ritual dances. The steps of these dances were of course quite unlike those of English dances. But the spirit of the dance was even more alien to the spirit of ballroom dancing than were the steps. Modern dancing, where all freedom of movement is lost in the crowding together of dozens of couples in a space about the size of a tablecloth, is little more than a peripatetic cuddling. (Not, let me hasten to add, that I have any objection to cuddling. But I hold with Ecclesiastes: "for every thing a time, for every purpose a season." And the time and place for cuddling a beautiful woman is not the narrow interstices between the dining-tables in the eating-room of a hotel with all the lights on! Under such conditions one can neither dance properly nor cuddle adequately!) But in these native dances there was no cuddling. They danced in couples, but for the most part not in each others' arms. And it was plain that each dancer took the partner for granted, as part of the setting, and was utterly concentrated on the ritual of the dance. Two small boys or two small girls would dance with the same intensity, the same look of abstract contemplation on their faces, as would a man with a woman.

After an hour or more of this we thought a change desirable. And as I had heard nothing from native singers in the hotels here but modern American songs—such as "Give me five minutes more" and the like—I thought I would like to sing the natives some Negro spirituals. For, after all, one should always if possible reciprocate in kind. So I began with "Mary had a baby." This,

The "Unknown People"

I found, they did not know, but when I had sung the chorus and the verses a couple of times they began to join in. Soon we were going great guns. "Deep River," one of the loveliest of the spirituals, they also did not know. But "Steal away to Jesus" they knew very well. And when we got to this they sang as if to split their throats—the warm voices rising in full-throated, beautiful harmonies, lovely to listen to.

The setting of the scene was extremely beautiful. The moon was at the full, and so powerful was its light that it cast shadows almost as strong as sunlight. The sky was of deep blue, save about the moon, where it paled into a silver radiance. About the surrounding hill-tops was a light haze, almost like a heat haze. Below, the sea lay still under the moonlight, and the lights of Montego shone brightly across the bay. Seldom in all my life have I looked on a scene of such utter beauty and peace. On the terrace sat half a dozen white folk. About me stood the hundred or more black folk. But in the singing of the spirituals the chasm which separates black and white was forgotten. For music is one of those things which unite men, where politics only divide them.

Then I got them to sing some of their songs to me, hoping that I should come upon local spirituals new to me. And one such there was which described the sinner's hard heart, and how that hard heart kept him from the Lord, how the Lord melted that heart of stone, and gave the sinner a heart of flesh. But most of their songs struck me rather as adaptations of hymns of the evangelistic order than as products of native music and poetry.

Memory is a strange thing, but I do not think I shall ever forget that last evening in Jamaica nor the beauty of the night, the magic of the singing.

But there was to be one more event also of a memorable character before we left Montego Bay the next day. It was the wedding of one of the Kerr-Jarrett girls. Mr. Kerr-Jarrett is the biggest planter hereabouts. He has two sons and four daughters. They are a singularly attractive family and the atmosphere of their home is beautiful. Now on this last day of our stay one of the daughters was to marry a tall young American. The event was one of the social events of the year, and folk came from all over the island to attend it. It served as an occasion for a gathering of the white clan of the island. The Blagroves came from Dry-harbour, sixty miles away, and that was by no means the longest distance traversed, for there is a bond between the white folk

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here, especially when, as with the Kerr-Jarretts and the Blagroves, the families have been settled here for very long periods of time.

The wedding took place in the Church of St. James, and the place was packed. The bride was a little late in arriving, and the tall groom, to whom the bride's brother acted as best man, looked a little self-conscious standing at the altar. But to arrive a little late is the proper form for a bride in these parts, I gather. The floor of the church was filled by white folk and the galleries with coloured folk. There is no "colour bar" in Jamaica, but there is a spontaneous grouping of black and white, as in this instance. Soon the lawns at the Kerr-Jarrett house, up on the hill, were filled with the society of Montego Bay from miles around.

The Kerr-Jarrett house is one of the old type of Jamaican houses which were built for coolness. Much of the house consists of verandah, and the rooms wander into each other with a conspicuous absence of doors. The furniture is of dark mahogany, and the houses run to mahogany wall panelling—the effect being to produce a sense of coolness and shade in contrast with the heat and the white light of the sun without. There must have been 150 people or more on the lawns about the house; and champagne and sandwiches were soon in full consumption. Then, with the company suitably mellowed, the big wedding cake on the table on the verandah was duly cut and the congratulatory speeches begun. There was the toast of the bride and bridegroom, proposed by the most confirmed bachelor in these parts. It was a very witty speech with many a light reference to Jamaica's export trade and to "Lend-Lease in reverse." There was the toast to the bridegroom's parents away there in the United States. There was the toast to the bridesmaids, proposed by Peter Blagrove in a speech which had gestated with difficulty in his brain over a period of some weeks, and which he delivered with great relief. The afternoon sun shone warmly, and the lawns on the hillside overlooking the bay provided a setting as perfect in its way as the setting of the previous night.

At 6 p.m. we, the Wisemans, and the Stephensons, quietly slipped away from the party to go back to "Cromarty," where we gave a farewell drink to these two families who had been so kind to us. And then, with many a promise of returning as soon as might be to this lovely land, Litchfield and I bade them farewell, and turned to packing for the homeward voyage.



The Return Trip — A "Bill of Rights"

THERE is a story told to the effect that a farmer in England once bought a prize bull at great price, and that he displayed it to a neighbour with immense pride. Some few weeks later the neighbour was astonished to see this magnificent bull harnessed to a plough. "What on earth are you doing, using a prize bull like that?" he asked. The farmer replied dourly: "I am going to teach that animal that life ain't all pleasure . . . !"

The last month, after my initial fatigue had once passed, has been a month of pleasure. The journey out was delightful, for everyone fitted in effortlessly and harmoniously. The stay in Montego Bay was—apart from anxiety as to what was happening to Beaverbrook—pure joy. Nothing was organized or arranged. Everything happened. We found the Stephensons and Wisemans there and that was a joy. Invitations flowed in from the Kerr-Jarretts, the Blagroves, and others. Expeditions were arranged spontaneously, and everything—except the alligator hunt—went perfectly. But as Jack London used to say: "For every moment of pleasure a corresponding moment of pain: for every moment of exaltation a corresponding moment of wallowing in reptilian slime!"

On our homeward-bound ship we are being taught, like the bull, that "life ain't all pleasure."

Litchfield and I went aboard on Monday evening. We went into the dining-room where the captain and a number of officers were eating dinner. Nobody greeted us. Nobody introduced us. There was a stiff nod from the captain, that was all. We sat down to eat. Nobody made any conversation. A strange forbidding atmosphere hung over all. In my bones I knew in that moment that this, unlike the *Eros*, was not a happy ship. Every minute we have spent on board since has confirmed this. And to-day after two days we are going to do something about it. But first I

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must recite the series of incidents which have led up to our mild revolt.

Yesterday—Wednesday morning—we had arrived at Port Antonio. There for some hours the ship loaded bananas and the rest of its quota of passengers for England came aboard. We spent those hours sunbathing and swimming at the Titchfield Hotel, which stands on the point of a promontory jutting out into the lovely natural harbour of Port Antonio. But by 1 p.m. we were back on the ship to find Gammans and his wife, whom we knew, and twelve other passengers who were new to us—sixteen passengers in all.

Now the Gammans like fruit, and fruit is good for us. "An apple a day keeps the doctor away."—"Eat more fruit" and all that sort of thing. We were served with an extremely badly-cooked lunch of which the second course consisted of tinned fruit from England! Gammans made inquiries as to why a ship leaving Jamaica—which is the natural home of an immense variety of fruit, should apparently have no fresh fruit aboard—but could get no satisfaction.

At lunch we endeavoured to make conversation, but found the ship's officers taciturn to a degree. Moreover, we noted that while serviettes were placed for the officers, none were placed for the passengers. We exchanged significant glances at so curious a thing but said nothing, though afterwards Gammans said a few pointed things to me about the food.

Later in the day I asked for some "Player's Cigarettes" only to find that there was not a single packet of Player's aboard, and that all one could get were "State Express" and some other brands quite unknown to me.

Still later, I asked for a book from the ship's miserable little library. I was told I could have one on payment of a deposit of five shillings. This nettled me, for I have never heard of such a thing before, and I declined to avail myself of the library's services.

One of the passengers came aboard very drunk. He was a Jamaican—a "near white"—and for three hours he sat at the piano picking out tunes on one finger of each hand till I was nearly distracted.

This morning—Thursday—we have compared notes on our experiences so far. The passengers are crowded together three or four in a cabin. Now the last time this ship sailed she carried

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fifty-four passengers. This trip there are only sixteen. It is plain therefore that there are a lot of empty cabins. We are crowded together—except me, I have a cabin to myself—not because this is necessary, but because it saves a little labour.

There is no swimming bath; and no provision for deck games. The library we dislike because (a) it is small and full of rubbish, and (b) we don't like this five-shilling deposit business, which is quite unnecessary.

The ship is very dirty. The carpet in my cabin has not been beaten or cleaned for years, I should think, and other passengers report similarly of theirs. Mrs. Gammans was rebuked by the stewardess this morning for turning up for breakfast at 8.45 instead of 8.30 a.m.

The officers appear to regard the passengers as an unmitigated nuisance, and there is no attempt to cater for their needs. There is not even a writing-table or ink apparently available.

The deck-chairs are dirty, and many are broken. There are apparently no magazines or periodicals aboard, save what we have brought ourselves.

We discuss matters amongst ourselves, and decide that I should draft a "Bill of Rights," and that Gammans should see the purser about it. Gammans knows the manager of this line personally and was asked by him to let him know how the trip went. He will tell the purser this, and quietly explain the feelings of the passengers on these matters. There at the moment the matter rests.

But all these things trouble me. This line, when the present rush on passenger accommodation slackens, will have to compete with American ships. Nobody will travel in it under the conditions we are experiencing, if any other accommodation is available. I suppose the explanation is that during the war it was a question of getting people transported anyhow, under no matter what conditions. But the war has been ended for eighteen months now, and people will not put up with these conditions in time of peace. Nor can I understand the mentality of officers who will sit down with serviettes while passengers are denied them. Not that I care two hoots about a serviette. But I do care about such distinctions at a common table.

This morning the Jamaican near-white, accompanied by three darker brethren, came into the saloon where I was writing and aggressively asked whether I objected to his playing the piano.

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"Not if you can play it with more than two fingers," I replied. "But you were very naughty yesterday." Then I explained to him that there were sixteen of us, and that we had to be together for a fortnight. Some of us liked to read, some to write, some to sing. There was only one saloon, and the best thing would be to set out a given time for piano playing, etc. If he and his friends wanted to play and sing now, I would, of course, stop writing.

This mollified them and they said that, of course, they would wait till later. I thanked them and they settled down to a game of cards. When I finished writing I went over to them and said that there was one thing I would like them to do for me, and that was to teach me native Jamaican songs, which I would like to know. This completed the mollification, and all is now well on this front.

I talk with one of the crew and find that he shares my concern over the treatment of the passengers. He thinks that this ship will go out of business as far as passengers are concerned, as soon as travel conditions become at all normal. He has from time to time made suggestions for improvement, but has been snubbed for his pains.

The ship's doctor is very critical of the effect of the New Health Service Bill. His view is that there is a strong case for extending the scope of the old National Health Insurance Bill, especially to cover the salaried and the middle classes. But he does not think in principle that the work of the family doctor can be improved upon, and fears that we shall lose to other countries the services of many of our best specialists. He instances the case of a specialist at the Gt. Ormond Street Hospital, who, he says, is going to Canada.

Later, Gammans reports on his talk with the purser, who is full of excuses. Deck sports?—a matter for the chief officer! A swimming-bath?—there isn't one aboard! Lack of fruit? The ship was provisioned in London and he has no authority to buy fruit in Jamaica! Cigarettes—the popular brands were all smoked on the way out (there are plenty of these brands in Jamaica; I could easily have brought a few hundred with me!). Quality of the cooking—he will have a word with the cook. The five-shilling deposit on books? Many things have been stolen from the ship! Quality of the books in the library—a matter for the

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office at home! The dirty and broken deck-chairs? These were all he could get at Kingston. And finally the ship has not been reconditioned for six years or more. This, indeed, is all too manifest.

Gammans thinks, however, that the purser has had a bit of a jolt, and we agree to let matters stand for twenty-four hours or so and see if there is any improvement.

CHAPTER 33



Notes on Jamaica

THE distinctive accent of the English in Jamaica is more Welsh than anything. It is frequently difficult not to believe that one is talking to someone straight from the Principality when one converses with a member of one of the old families here.

The distinctive noises of the island are the cock-crow, the braying of donkeys, and the noise of the crickets. Cock-crow one hears in the morning. The braying of donkeys—surely the most agonized, mournful, and self-pitying noise made by any of the animal creation, one may hear at any hour, day or night—for there is no “close-season” for grief. The crickets keep regular hours. They begin at sunset. As the sun goes down and the swift tropical darkness conquers the earth, they begin their chorus. In a few minutes it is so universal, so all-pervading, that it resembles a continuous whistling noise on one note. It is so continuous, and the monotone is so unvaried, that the natives say that they cannot hear it at all.

All hours are good in Jamaica. The hours between six and eight in the morning have a delightful coolness and freshness; and a wise man rises early so as not to miss them. By nine, the sun is a fiery lover whose embraces are passionate. In early afternoon a kind of surfeited languor pervades the air. The siesta is not an institution. It is a law of nature here. If you didn’t go to bed for an hour or two you would fall asleep in your chair.

Towards sundown there is a sudden drop in temperature, and a cool breeze springs up. After sundown the breeze dies away and the temperature rises again.

I was struck by the number of natives who were mutilated in some way or another—men and women with missing arms or legs. But I could get no satisfactory explanation of this, though it was suggested that the mutilated tend to drift into the towns,

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where begging is easier. Begging is very general. "Give me something" is a phrase you hear all day.

Hospital accommodation is very inadequate, and such as there is is badly overcrowded. In spite of the lovely climate there is a good deal of disease.

The island has been badly hit by the "Panama disease" which has attacked the banana plants. Attempts are being made to produce varieties of banana which are immune from this disease. Some such varieties have been produced and are being tried out. I was told, however, that they lack the flavour of the old varieties.

There is much unemployment in the island. But it is difficult to assess statistically, for much of the labour is casual, and changes frequently from one type of work to another.

The colour of the native population generally is black. But it shades off with individuals to *café au lait*, and near-white. The children of "mixed marriages" vary greatly in colour. A black child may have an almost white brother or sister. I heard of a case where a Jamaican so white as to look English, married an English girl in England and took her to the island. When he introduced her to his family she had the shock of her life to find them all as black as coal.

The native women carry themselves with much grace and freedom. This it is said, is due to the universal habit they have, from early childhood, of carrying everything balanced upon their heads. They can walk very long distances with quite heavy baskets of produce so balanced on their heads.

There are few singing birds on the island. Bird life is less abundant than in England and many of the types of bird are songless. Lizards abound, and there are some snakes, but mostly of the harmless variety. There is everywhere a kind of vulture crow, which it is forbidden to kill because of the services it renders as a scavenger. There is an immense variety of trees unknown in England—mahogany, cottonwood, coco-nut palms, etc. Of all of these I found the coco-nut palm the most beautiful. The play of the light upon the fronded leaves of the coco-nut palm is extremely lovely.

The island has a wide variety of scenery—seashore, sloping hills, parkland, mountain, and river. And a sensible variety of climate. On the mountains it is cool and fresh, so fresh that a fire is welcome o' nights. At the seashore it can be very hot. On the low-lying lands, especially where the land is irrigated for sugar,

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the mosquito is a pest. But at a few hundred feet above sea level it ceases to be a problem. At sea level you sleep under mosquito nets. A few hundred feet above it you can dispense with them. Moth and insect life is very plentiful. Among the animal forms of life is the mongoose. Introduced to keep down the rats, it is now a menace to chickens, which it likes even better than the rodents. The mongoose is the subject of one of the few genuine Jamaican folk songs I have come across—"Shine, Mongoose!",

Hotel prices on the island are extremely high—a charge of three pounds a day being quite common. It is better, therefore, to stay as the guest of some rich man. Jamaica ought to be the great holiday centre for America. Nassau, Miami, and other American holiday centres are not to be compared with it in any way. But the difficulty of getting licences for liquor, the strong puritan tradition which animates the administration, will probably prevent the development of the island as a holiday resort to anything like its full possibilities.

There is a noticeable Syrian, and a still more noticeable Chinese element, in the population of Jamaica. Both types do well in business, and a considerable proportion of the shop-keeping trade of the island is run by them.

CHAPTER 34



Life Aboard — The "Near-White" — The Cayman Islands

I HAVE now been three days on board. It has been three days of unpleasantness.

The "near-white" Jamaican youth who came aboard drunk, and signalized his arrival by playing for about four hours on the piano with one finger of each hand, that youth whom I thought, yesterday, I had brought to some show of reason on the subject of conduct compatible with communal living, has made himself a first-class problem. For he is permanently drunk. He has brought on board a substantial supply of rum, and he sups continually. He cannot keep away from the piano. Nor can he play it. He laboriously picks out, with strong punches of his index fingers, sentimental tunes which match his drunkenness. And he as often as not strikes the wrong note once every three times. Yesterday afternoon he was at it again, and this morning he began before breakfast. We have spoken to the purser, and the purser is said to have spoken to him. But the nuisance continues unabated. But this is not the worst.

This young man, handsome in a sullen kind of way, shares a cabin with three others. Of these one is a very decent native teacher from Cayman Islands, who is going to England to look at our rural educational methods. The second is a Jamaican, European in feature but black in colour, who has now added an accordion to the piano. The third is a Jewish textile chap, small, middle-aged, quiet, sober, and very intelligent.

The "near-white"—who has a store of rum in his cabin, to which he has frequent recourse—is, it seems, a hopeless degenerate. All his talk is of women, homosexual adventures, and so on. He boasts of the women he will have in England, and brags that he has had venereal disease six times already. He has given the Jew the creeps. The Jew cannot stand his language or his choice of

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topics, and is fearful of using the same toilet and bath as the Jamaican youth. Last night, rather than stay in that cabin, he slept out on deck. To-day, he has seen the captain and the captain has fixed him up with a cabin down below. But the problem of the "near-white" remains; and I have a feeling that tragedy is not far away. The boy is so unbalanced as to be nearly crazy. He has been found in a state of drunken stupor, sitting about in all sorts of places where he had no right to be at all. He suffers acute moods of depression, alternating with moods of exhilaration, in which he wants to sing or poke about at the piano. And now he is fortified by an accordion player! I fear he will finish up in the ship's "brig" before he is through. Personally I'm in favour of putting him in the refrigeration chambers with the bananas to cool him off, but I doubt if the captain's powers extend to that.

Our protest yesterday at conditions prevailing in the ship has begun to produce some results. Some fresh fruit has appeared at table. We have achieved equality with the officers in the matter of serviettes—but it is an equality on a lower basis, paper serviettes having been issued all round. Morning coffee at 11 a.m. has been instituted. Deck quoits have appeared aft. We can now get fruit drinks at the bar. Ink has made its appearance in the saloon, so that we can fill fountain pens. There is no writing-table anywhere, so the circular saloon tables have to serve—but we can make do. Some effort appears to have been made to make the cabins a little cleaner—but the carpet in mine is sticky with the dirt of years. The officers are a little more human, a little less negative at table—but conversation is still a mighty effort.

We are travelling at a steady fifteen knots towards the north-east. To-day it is already noticeably cooler. The sunshine has given place to clouds and rain, and we have had to close the front port holes in the saloon. Of the sixteen passengers, six only are white, the rest coloured. Of the ten coloured people, six appear to be very nice quiet people (though even with them there is a gap which it is difficult for us to completely bridge), two appear to be utter nuisances, and the other two still doubtful. Nothing, I fear, can make this trip anything but an ordeal, to be endured with as much fortitude as possible.

I have discovered the paradise for the pensioner. It is the Cayman Islands, some two hundred miles from Jamaica to the north-west. There are three islands there: Grand Cayman (pop. 4,000); Cayman Brae (pop. 1,500); and Little Cayman (pop. 60).

Life Aboard

The word Cayman means alligator, and the islands are so called because Grand Cayman, seen at a distance from the sea, has an outline suggestive of that reptile. On the islands there is no income tax, no land tax, and no house tax. The only taxes are (1) a poll tax of eight shillings per head per annum for adults, and (2) an *ad valorem* duty of 12½ per cent on certain imports. The islands have some of the best bathing beaches in the world. The local industries are agriculture—sweet potatoes, pumpkins, yams, plantains, sugar, etc., mostly for home consumption—boat building, turtle fishing, and rope-making. There is a boat service and a plane service from Jamaica. The Cayman Islanders are, I am told, very fine seamen. The islands are a dependency of Jamaica, and are governed by a Commissioner, and an Assembly of Justices (nominated) and Vestrymen (elected every two years by adult suffrage). The best hotel—just in case you may think of going there!—is the Bay View Hotel, Grand Cayman—proprietors, Messrs. Messen and Company. All this, plus the fact that these islands were first discovered by Columbus and were originally named Las Tortugas (the tortoise islands), I learnt from the school teacher I mentioned a little while ago. And I have written it all down for your benefit.

To-night marked what I hope will be a turning-point in our social life on the ship. The chief engineer invited Gammans, Mr. Best, Litchfield, the Jewish textile chap, and me, together with the captain, the first officer, and the doctor, to a drink in his cabin before dinner. The occasion had not the happy spontaneity of such functions aboard the *Eros*, for our captain is practically conversationless, and much given to monosyllables, but Gammans and I kept the ball of talk passing sufficiently to make the occasion, for this ship, a howling success.

I need not add to the catalogue of the deficiencies of this ship that the wireless in the saloon is out of order. It is. But last night Gammans and I were allowed to go into the radio officers' room to hear a news bulletin. It wasn't an encouraging one. The British Government is "reporting" Albania to U.N.O. The Republicans in the U.S.A. are going to "slash" Truman's budget provisions. In London there is an "unofficial" transport strike on—but what it is about isn't clear. Is it, I wonder, the "Closed Shop" issue again. Or hours? Or wages? The bulletin says that on Monday next, if there is no settlement by then, the troops

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will take over the transport of food. O, democracy! Truman is reported to be preparing legislation to prevent the tie-ups in American industry which have been so frequent a feature of the last eighteen months.

I am old enough to remember the storm of indignation which swept the Labour and social democratic movements of Europe before the first World War, when M. Briand, then Prime Minister of France, broke a French railway strike by the simple expedient of calling the railwaymen to the Colours. I remember, too, the utterances of Sir Stafford Cripps not long before the second World War to the effect that any workman who joined the Armed Forces was a traitor to his class. Now Sir Stafford sits in a Government which contemplates using the army to break a transport strike! Time brings strange whirligigs!

CHAPTER 35



The "Anonymous Collective" — Importance of the Individual

IT is the fashion in these days to denigrate and underwrite the individual and to exalt "the anonymous collective." "It is the movement, not the man, which counts." That is a common saying in Labour circles. The heresy involved in this attitude, and embodied in the phrase I have quoted, is a very grave one. It matches and marches with that other heresy—the heresy of Engels embodied in the phrase "Consciousness is always determined by material conditions—never material conditions by consciousness."

Engels' phrase makes history into a mechanical process. It eliminates the dynamic of the human will. The exaltation of the "anonymous collective," and the denigration of the individual, further diminishes the part of the human personality in the shaping of events and the moulding of things. Together these two phrases provide the philosophic basis for the ant-heap form of society towards which we are visibly and rapidly moving.

But how untrue are both phrases! How distorted the view of life which they embody. It is true that the individual is affected by environment, that to a degree he is "subdued to the material in which he works." But it is also true that the impact of the individual upon his environment can be as marked as its impact upon him: and that men mould events as much as they are moulded by them. The truth is that man is neither an automaton helplessly responding to events and things, nor a god who can move them carelessly as he will. Man is neither an all-powerful "positive," nor a powerless "negative." He is the medium through which mind works upon matter. He experiences the stubborn resistances of matter which limit his absolute freedom into a conditional one. But that conditional freedom he has, and while he has it the materialist conception of history cannot stand.

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Consciousness affects and moulds material conditions as well as material conditions moulding consciousness. And the individual matters no less than the movement.

Perhaps the supreme example of this in our time was Lenin himself. When the Czarist régime crumbled, the common expectation of the Russian revolutionaries was that it would be succeeded by a democratic Parliamentary régime. Backward Russia would, they thought, have to go through a period of capitalist industrialization before it became ripe for socialism. And for capitalist industrialism the political instrument was parliamentary democracy.

Had there been no Lenin it is probable that the Russian revolution would have stopped at political change, followed by a period of industrial development, on the Western models of America and Britain. Later when Russia had "caught up" with the West, the time would be ripe for social transformation, as distinct from political change and industrial development. That was the commonly accepted thesis amongst the Russian revolutionaries. There were no gaps in history or in social development. There could be no "leaps" from feudalism to socialism. Russia would have to travel the path already followed by the capitalist States before the final transformation could come. Only in an advanced industrial state did the economic possibilities for the establishment of socialism exist.

When Lenin, arriving in Petrograd from his long exile, poured scorn on this whole conception, when he announced that political democracy on the Western model was absurd, when he postulated that political change was not enough, and that the Bolsheviks must destroy parliamentarianism as czarism had been destroyed, and proceed at once to the establishment of socialism, his best friends thought that "the old man" had gone insane. Lenin's strong hands seized control. He put his shoulder to the wheel of history and gave it such a shove as it has seldom had in recorded time. In a matter of months, Kerensky was in exile. Parliamentarianism had been succeeded by the "dictatorship of the proletariat." And Russia was in the midst of the most radical social transformation of all time.

Later on, Trotsky worked out a thesis to account for it all. He called it "the law of unequal development," and you may find it worked out in his *History of the Russian Revolution*. According to this theory history did not only proceed by evolutionary

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processes. It was capable of sudden leaps and jumps. It was not necessary that a backward country should go through the stages already traversed by more fully developed countries before it surpassed them. No—a backward country could learn from more advanced countries and leap ahead of them. That was a *post facto* theory. It was devised after the event to account for the event. But the event was the work of one man—Lenin. In defiance of the Marxism he professed, in superb scorn of the materialist conception of history which he himself postulated, he converted what would have been without him a political adaptation into a social revolution.

I am not here arguing whether that was a good thing or a bad thing. I am only demonstrating that Engels' doctrine is nonsense; and that it is not true to say that—"the individual doesn't matter: it is the movement that counts."

But indeed all our modern history abounds in examples of what I am saying. According to the Marxist thesis, socialism should have come first in some highly developed industrial state like Germany. Germany had the "economic possibilities of socialism": it had the strongest Trade Unions and Socialist movement in Europe. It was "ripe for transformation." Surely! Only it had no Lenin. And it did have a Hitler. And so we witnessed the paradox that while "backward" Russia went Communist, "advanced" Germany went Fascist, and very nearly all Europe Fascist too!

Of course a *post facto* theory was produced by the Communist to account for the German phenomenon, just as Trotsky had produced a theory to account for what had happened in Russia. Fascism was explained "as the last stage in a declining Capitalism." It seemed that a "backward" State which had succeeded in becoming "advanced" was not necessarily "ripe for transformation." There was yet another phase it had to go through—the phase of Fascism. This, of course, was utter defeatism, and this defeatism became a feature of the German social democratic and Communist movements. This defeatism, deriving directly from the materialist conception of history, was one of Hitler's biggest assets.

With Lenin dead, Stalin's Russia made terms with Hitler. And when it came to standing up to the "Fascist beast" it was the British—Right and Left alike—who made up their minds to deal with him. The only dissentients were the British Communists!

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But one does not need to go into high politics to illustrate the thesis that the individual is not the hopeless sport of circumstance and that he still counts supremely.

As a Trade Union leader I know that the quality of a Branch depends upon the quality of its Secretary. If the Branch Secretary be a good and able fellow, his branch will be a good branch. If the General Secretary of a Union be good and able the Union will be a good one. If he be slack, lazy or venal, those qualities will permeate the Union as a whole. In every walk of life human organizations take their tone and temper from the leading figures in them. A slack, unpunctual office chief will be served by a slack, unpunctual, office staff. A keen and energetic chief will find his staff living up to the standards he sets.

Let there be corruption in a political leadership and it will spread like an evil fungus from centre to circumference. Men are unequal in all sorts of ways, but they are akin in this—that they seek and need leadership, and that the character and quality of the leadership will be reflected in the led.

CHAPTER 36



Gossip Aboard — The Doctor on Longevity — Library Deposit

THIS is our fourth day out. So far the weather has been kind and I have done some sunbathing each day. But each day it grows a little cooler. To-day, there is a tang in the air, and a suggestion that the whiplash of winter may not be far away. Going outward, we went south-west to the Azores, making a bee-line, so to speak, for the sunshine and the warmth. On this return trip we are going north-east. We have to-day passed Bermuda some two hundred miles on our port bow. From now on we go east-north-east. The front ports have been closed, and the "fiddles" have been put on the tables in the dining-saloon. The ship, after some days of smooth water, has now begun to pitch, and rougher weather is ahead. Personally I don't mind a ship pitching. I like rolling less. And I detest a combination of both. But I don't, thank the Lord, get seasick anyway. Jamaicans are not good sailors as a rule. And this may solve the problem of our "near white." On the axiom that it is good that one man should be sick for the people, I unashamedly hope so!

Aboard, we get a little mellower. Before lunch I was invited to a pink gin in the Captain's cabin, with the Captain, the doctor, and the first officer. Talk ran on longevity! The doctor affirms that the shortest lived categories of people are doctors and Members of Parliament, who snuff out about fifty—fifty-five. My mind instinctively reverts to a Chinese proverb which I picked up in Jamaica—"Enjoy yourself! It is later than you think!" And I ponder on the Chiltern Hundreds! But I also reflect that with Members of Parliament there appears to be an age beyond which, if you pass it without dying, you appear to be practically immortal! Chamberlain lived till 70. Lloyd George till 80 or so. Winston is 73, and still going great guns. Will Thorne went on till 82 or thereby! There's hope for little Willie yet!

If Members of Parliament and doctors are the shortest lived

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categories, sea-captains and parsons (he avers) are the two longest-lived categories. It is understandable that parsons should enjoy a special measure of divine favour, but sea-captains are notorious sinners. I imagine that the real explanation is that neither do much work—"not what you might call work"—whereas M.P.s and doctors are always on the go.

I asked the doctor what effect on longevity smoking and drinking have, and tell him that one doctor I know estimated that on the average smoking and drinking subtract about two years from the expectation of life. "They may," he said, "but they're just as likely to add two years to it. If there is a family history of alcoholic poisoning, drink can be very bad, and may shorten a man's life a great deal. But if there isn't: and if the health is all right, and there's no sign of trouble in the stomach, it will do them no harm, and may do good. One of the best cures for the kind of recurring chest trouble from which Churchill suffers is a glass of champagne about four times a day." I must mention this to Mr. Churchill, but I've an idea that that astonishing man will probably have anticipated the doctor.

However, I record the doctor's opinion here in order that none of my friends will desist from inviting me to a convivial glass from the fear that they might be contributing to my premature demise, and that no reader of this book should refrain from sending me a case of champagne—or of whisky, gin, brandy, or any other good gift—in the wholly mistaken belief that he would be doing me harm if he did. If there's any risk, I'll take it!

A propos of alcohol, I recall for the entertainment of my hosts, Churchill's description of how he got to like whisky and soda. When he was a young man he went, as a subaltern, to India. From his base there he was sent up country on an expedition. But something went wrong with the commissariat. It appeared that only two kinds of drink had been provided—(1) whisky and soda, and (2) ginger-ale. Winston wrote of the matter after this fashion.

Confronted with this formidable emergency, this inescapable necessity of choice, what did I do? Did I seek to evade my responsibility? No, I made my decision. *And I overcame my natural aversion to whisky and soda. . . .*

He then added:

Nor was this any temporary victory! The fruits of that conquest have remained with me to this day. . . .

Gossip Aboard

I also recall his celebrated dictum—"You cannot make a good speech on iced water."

Conversation at lunch, following this little interlude in the Captain's cabin, was somewhat easier than it has been, which recalls to my mind Housman's couplet:

Malt does more then Milton can
To justify God's ways to man!

As I say, we grow a little mellow.

The steward, who opens the little library at eleven each morning, is a little disturbed that I won't use it—because of this five-shilling deposit nonsense. To-day he said that he would be responsible for my five bob—to which I replied "Get thee behind me, Satan!" It's the whole idea of a deposit of five bob, not the five bob itself, which annoys me. This issue of principle is not to be disposed of by someone else offering to pay my fine, so to speak.

Not by such evasions did Wilberforce abolish the slave trade, did Plimsoll establish the Plimsoll line; A. P. Herbert get his Divorce Bill through, or Eleanor Rathbone secure the adoption of Family Allowances! And shall the Member for Rugby prove less adamant than his illustrious Independent predecessors? The saints forbid! Until that five-shilling deposit is abolished, rather than borrow a book from the library, I will read this book that I myself have written! Stubborn determination could go no further than this! Besides which, if I get bored with myself and my own book, there's always Shakespeare to fall back on!

Wireless news comes through to-night of a Dakota crash near Ashford in Kent, in which Tom Horrabin, a Parliamentary colleague, is involved. Several people were killed and more injured. Among the latter is Tom Horrabin who with others has been taken to hospital. I like Tom very well, and I do hope he's not badly hurt. He is an old civil servant, having started his career as a second division clerk in the Board of Trade. He has been in Parliament for some years as a Liberal. But recently he left the Liberal Party, and will, before long I think, join the Labour Party. This, I think, is a pity, for he has a good independent mind.

CHAPTER 37



Trade Unions — Size of Unions

IT seems that the strike of London Transport workers, about which we heard over the radio yesterday, is due to the slow working of the machinery for dealing with disputes in this industry. But I suspect that this is only half the story. The other half, I should be prepared to find, consists of the slow moving machinery of the Transport and General Workers' Union itself. Which will afford a text for dealing with the problem of size in relation to function.

I have more than once, in the course of this book, commented upon the errors into which men can be led by yielding to the "impulse to opposites"; the tendency to assume that the cure for an unsatisfactory state of things is to establish the opposite state of things. The structure of the Transport and General Workers' Union affords a further example of this.

Trade Unionism in Britain began with the Craft Union, that is to say, the kind of Union which seeks to cater for the workers at a given craft—engineers, woodworkers, dockers, etc. Indeed, the oldest of the Trade Unions in Britain is the Engineers' Union, a Craft Union. The Craft Unions have done a very good job of work for their members, and they are justly proud of their traditions.

But they suffered from certain limitations. Thus, within a given plant or industry there will be employed workers at many crafts, and common action between the Unions catering for these different crafts is essential. With a multiplicity of different Unions this was often difficult to secure. And so the demand arose for a different type of Trade Unionism—Industrial Unionism.

The central idea of this type of Trade Unionism was that the basis of organization should not be the craft, but the industry. If a man was employed in a given industry—say, the coal industry—then, the argument ran, it didn't matter whether he was a coal-hewer, an engineer, or what not, he ought to be in the Miners' Union.

So, to the older conception of the Craft Union, which organ-

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ized members of a particular craft in whatever industry they were employed, was opposed the idea of the Industrial Union, which organized all the workers in a particular industry, whatever their craft might be.

Nor did matters stop there. Not only was there a common interest between all the workers in a given industry, but various industries themselves were interlocked one with another. Imperial Chemicals, for example, went into thirty or forty different industries. By the same logic which justified the Industrial Union as against the Craft Union, what was needed, it seemed, was the "inter-industrial Union." And so there came into being the vast industrial octopi—such as the Transport and General Workers' Union, and the General and Municipal Workers' Union—of to-day—great amorphous bodies, with a membership employed in scores of different industries, and running into the million figures.

It is not my purpose here to argue which form of organization is theoretically the better—the Craft, the Industrial, or the General Union. What I am concerned to do is to point out that in all the theoretical arguments about the superiority of the Industrial to the Craft Union, and the superiority of the General to the Industrial Union—one thing was forgotten. It was the relation between size and function.

Up to a point, as I have earlier remarked, the bigger a thing is the better. All sorts of things are possible to a Union of 100,000 members which are not possible to a Union of 5,000 members. But there is a point beyond which the bigger a Union becomes the less democratic, the more bureaucratic, the less responsive to the needs of the members, the more slow moving, the more cumbersome it becomes. Quantitative growth precipitated qualitative change. If the "unofficial strikes" of the past few years were analysed and classified it would be found that by far the largest proportion have occurred in the ranks of members of the Big Unions—the Industrial and the General Unions. And one of the greatest causes of such disputes has been the slowness with which the Union functions, and the dilatoriness with which the conciliation machinery works.

At one time, London busmen had a Union of their own. Numerically it was comparatively small, but its Executive Committee consisted of working busmen. So with the dockers and other trades. In such Unions close contact was maintained

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with the rank and file. Any trouble in the industry was rapidly reflected at the centre of the Union. But to-day, the London busmen and the dockers are only small elements in a vast amorphous organization which seeks to cover everybody from midwives to gravediggers. What has been gained in numbers and size has been lost in quickness and adaptability, and democratic control. And so discontent is endemic, and from time to time breaks out in unofficial strikes, such as the one we have just heard about. Mr. G. D. H. Cole, perhaps our leading authority on the Trade Union movement in Britain, has publicly urged the need for reversing engines in this matter, and has recommended that these great agglomerations, like the Transport and General Workers' Union, should split up into smaller and more manageable bodies. I agree with him.

Meantime, if George Isaacs, our Minister of Labour, wants to do the Trade Union Movement and incidentally the country a good turn, he should stop giving his blessing to the "Closed Shop" and set about speeding up the conciliation machinery in the various industries. If the rule were general that all claims should be dealt with within a month of their being filed, and that in the event of deadlock arbitration should take place within another month, it would do more to prevent unofficial strikes than any other single reform.

On board the *Battle* of the Books has been won. Yesterday the steward intimated to me that I could have a book from the library without deposit! But it is a Pyrrhic victory. For the twenty books or so which constitute the "library" are mostly rubbish. However, I have hit on Thomas Mann's "Joseph," which is something to go on with.

We are now in the North Atlantic, going due east. There is a following wind on our beam. The ship is rolling heavily and one has to move with caution about the decks. We are likely to carry this weather with us now all the way to the Channel. The temperature, however, is still mild—astonishingly so. The waves are magnificent to watch. They rear themselves to fantastic heights, and the wind whips off their summits into masses of spray with which the ship itself is saturated. It is extremely difficult to write with the ship rolling at crazy angles all the time, but as this ship is loaded the roll is slower than on the *Eros* which, not being loaded, danced about in merry fashion in similar weather.

CHAPTER 38



A Hundred and Fifty Years Ago

FROM time to time it dawns on me, with an impact of mild surprise, that our ancestors were not all the dim-witted numbskulls which our current politics, which wish to change everything they did, would seem to pre-suppose. I am disposed to admit, at the age of fifty-two, that the old boys knew a thing or two, and that there may have been some things in which they were not our inferiors.

The other day, there came into my possession a copy of Number One of the *Weekly Dispatch*. It bears the date, 27th September, 1801. It was priced at 6d. a copy, for in those days the duty on newspapers—the “tax on knowledge”—had not yet been repealed. It was published by C. Barber, and “sold at 201 Strand, opposite St. Clement’s Church, where orders and advertisements may be received.” It consisted of four pages.

Being Number One of a new newspaper, it published a feature dealing with the purpose and the policy of the paper. And a very fine declaration it is, full of good intentions, and animated by a very proper spirit.

The principal object of this paper shall be to convey the most authentic, interesting and useful information, and therefore it will always contain a faithful detail of every important transaction of which a knowledge can be obtained during the course of the week preceding its publication, and up to the very moment of its being put to press. Every great event occurring on the Continent of Europe, and in all places where Naval and Military operations are carried on; every Question of War and Peace, and everything connected with the British Empire; together with the Internal State of the Country, and its dependencies in all parts of the world, shall be presented to the reader’s attention with such observations as may serve to inspire the subjects of the United Kingdom with confidence in its resources, and with zeal in its Defence. . . .

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Our forefathers who started this paper were, it seems, English, and they believed in England.

Parliamentary proceedings were not to be neglected:

The substance and spirit of every Parliamentary Debate will also be given, not only with the utmost accuracy as to the statements of the speakers, but with correctness in point of composition and style (a sly dig this! for alas, even when we Parliamentarians are accurately reported, our speeches, it must be confessed, are often lacking in composition and style!)—and a judicious curtailment of all superfluous matter; for which purpose this department of the paper shall be conducted by a faithful and experienced Reporter, who attends both Houses of Parliament. . . .

And then there enters the note of pride;

It is not too much to say that this advantage has never been, and is not likely to be, possessed by any other Weekly Paper.

The statement proceeds:—

Nor shall the *Dispatch* be inattentive to occurrences of a subordinate character: the proceedings of the different Courts of Justice, Corporate Bodies, Public Meetings, the Theatre; and every part of Domestic History that can excite interest, or convey instruction, shall be presented to the Public. A column or two shall be devoted to the Arts; to Literature; to Original Essays; the Fashions, etc.; but particularly to the important subject of Agriculture and Provisions, on which the Public may expect always to receive the fullest information.

Then comes a declaration much favoured by me:—

With regard to the Politicks of this paper, it is necessary to declare that it will always stand on the broad basis of INDEPENDENCE, unconnected with Factions or Parties, but uniformly supporting the INESTIMABLE CONSTITUTION of this country; that its sentiments shall ever be guided by justice; confronted by a due regard for the Laws and the Government, and shall have for their ultimate object, the advancement of social moral and religious Order . . .

And then, with an eye to the “business side” the statement concludes:—

All communications which reach the *Dispatch* shall be carefully attended to. And Advertisers may be assured that their advertisements will be placed in a conspicuous part of the paper and in such a manner as to affix the attention of the Reader. But no advertisement or paragraph bordering on indelicacy, or tending to hurt the feelings of individuals, shall ever find a place in this Paper.

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With such a declaration of intentions not even the proponents of the appointment of the Royal Commission on the Press could possibly quarrel!

How was the world wagging on September 27, 1801?

Foreign affairs then bulked, as they do to-day, very large in the public eye. The leading article of the *Dispatch* is devoted to the negotiations with France, which seemed to be going about as badly as to-day's negotiations with Russia . . . Says the leading article:

The most contradictory statements have for some time past been made on the subject of the Negotiation between Great Britain and France. From the secrecy which His Majesty's Ministers have uniformly observed on this occasion, every assertion must depend solely on conjecture; and it is only from a general view of circumstances that an opinion can be given. The manner in which this Negotiation has been so long protracted, together with the hostile preparations carried on with such activity along the enemy's coasts, are sufficient to warrant us in supposing that the blessings of peace are more distant than was at first fondly hoped for. The sentiment that prevails among mercantile men will serve still more to confirm this opinion. Policies of Insurance were handed about at Lloyd's Coffee House in the course of the week, offering fifty guineas to return an hundred if the war should continue to the 2nd of November, 1802. Inviting as these premiums were, it was not considered a good thing, and we understand the parties who set it on foot, did not succeed to the extent they wished.

The threatened invasion on the part of France is another topic on which the partial alarm which it first created in this country has fortunately subsided. We should be extremely sorry to understand that this security arises from a belief that that desperate measure will not be attempted. The possibility of such an attempt being resolved upon by our inveterate enemies is strengthened by a variety of circumstances, but above all by the immense numbers of troops stationed along their coasts, by the extensive preparations they have been making in their ports; by the unaccountable delays in the Negotiation; and by the active and vigilant measures which our Government is now adopting for the defence of the country. . . .

In its News columns the paper notes:

We hear that Rifle Corps are to be raised in the Counties of Kent, Essex and other Counties on the coast. It is understood that the individuals who compose them are in no case to be called upon to go out of the county to which they belong, nor to leave their respective parishes, except in case of actual invasion.

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And in its Naval column:

Deal, September 15th. Wind N.N.W. This morning Vice-Admiral Lord Nelson sailed from the Downs, in His Majesty's ship *Amazon*, with the *Express*, advice-boat, and several Revenue Cutters, on a cruise to the Westward. . . .

But the English, though prepared, seem not to have been unduly alarmed. The "Court and Fashion News" column notes that:

Mr. Dundas continues at his hunting seat of Doneira, in Perthshire, till the end of October, when he returns to the capital.

Mr. Pitt goes to Walmer Castle next week, on a shooting party.

The same column notes:

His Majesty does not, in the use of his private box fitting up in Covent Garden Theatre, mean to exclude himself from the sight of the audience, but to enjoy the dramatic entertainment without the formality of State.

The spirit of Drake, it is plain, still survived!

Agriculture, as it is to-day, was going through a crisis, of which the column, "Agriculture and Provisions" says:

There are few subjects on which, for the last twelve months, the public mind has been so deeply interested as the excessive dearness of every article of agricultural produce: and never was there one that called more loudly for the attention of Government. . . . The present time is distinguished for a train of evils, for which no parallel can be found in the history of this country. Dreadful scarcities have often occurred in Great Britain . . . but it was not until the close of the 18th Century and the beginning of the 19th Century that a partial famine began to prevail in the midst of comparative abundance; and that the necessities of life were not to be procured except at prices which a large portion of the people were unable to afford. . . .

And then there follows this remarkable piece of prose and prophecy:

The cultivators of land and the importers of corn, have, by experience, ascertained this melancholy fact, that their profits increase with the public calamity; that a defective harvest is to them more lucrative than an abundant one, and this opinion, once established, may produce consequences which cannot be looked forward to without terror. It is impossible for us to say, after what we have already seen, but that the great monopolisers of land may find it to their interest to throw a considerable portion of their farms into an unproductive state. But a

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still greater evil is likely to arise from the monopoly of land, if it continues to increase as it has done. The gradations of rank between the landowners and the labourers will be completely destroyed; that happy order of society, which formed the bulwark of the British Constitution, will be reverted, and instead of the respectable country Gentlemen, the descendants of ancient families, who diffused comfort and happiness throughout their neighbourhoods, who constituted the stately pillars which supported the monarchical edifice of England, we shall in time behold the landed aristocracy composed of upstarts without honour, without dignity or sentiments; ignorant of the happy Constitution under which they live, and regardless for its preservation. . . .

I cannot help feeling that the name of the anonymous writer of this column may have been William Cobbett.

The "Court and Fashion" column is full of good things. Thus:

The second son of the late Marquis of Downshire, who is about nine years of age, will be richer than his brother, the present Marquis. This circumstance arises from Lady Sandys, their Aunt, having settled the whole of the family estates on the second son. This was in consequence of a dispute which the late Marquis had with her Ladyship some years since, relative to an estate in Chancery . . .

Again:

Some weeks since an advertisement appeared in the London papers for seven wives; and the following advertisement appeared in the *Dorchester Journal* of Saturday:

"As seven Ladies of Respectability, good Education, engaging Manners, of Serious Turn, etc, wish to enter into the matrimonial state, and whose Characters acquiesce to those advertised for by Seven Gentlemen, the Ladies, all of joint-stock, wish for an advertisement appointing some place to meet them, within the County of Dorset; if in the neighbourhood of Lydfinch, the more convenient."

There is recorded the case of a young man who abandoned his matrimonial responsibilities after entering the state of matrimony. It makes sad reading:

A few days since an unfortunate young man, named P—, put a period to his existence, at his lodgings in Shoemaker Row, Blackfriars. The deceased, who had abandoned his wife and children, lived with a woman of the town, in common with another paramour; and on the fatal morning, the other partner in this unhallowed firm went abroad with the dulcina, immediately after breakfast, and had not

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been ten minutes gone when the unfortunate P—— hanged himself from an hook in the chamber, with a piece of twine

The morals of sea-bathing, then a newly discovered form of recreation, were exciting some concern. The paper records:

In consequence of the indecent manner in which persons have openly bathed in the sea at Ramsgate, a meeting of the principal gentlemen frequenting that place was convened on the 7th instant, when certain resolutions were agreed to: the object of which was, to fix the limits within which persons should not bathe openly; to request that ladies and gentlemen would prohibit their servants, and commanding officers the soldiers under their command, from bathing within such limits. That every Gentleman using a bathing-machine, be requested to abstain as much as possible from the exposure of his person; that gentlemen intending to swim should not approach towards the Ladies' machines; and that the machines of the one should be kept at the distance of 50 or 60 yards from those of the other. . . .

At the Old Bailey the sordid record of human weakness and depravity unfolded itself then as now. But the sentences were very different. Offences against property were much more severely punished than offences against the person. Thirteen persons were sentenced to death that week, all for theft, in one case of a piece of cloth valued at thirty-nine shillings, and thirty-four persons were sentenced, for the same offence of stealing, to transportation for seven years. But at Clerkenwell a Genoese sailor who had severely stabbed an English sailor got off with only six months' imprisonment. And at the Winchester Quarter Sessions a man convicted of assaulting three constables got off with a fine of fifty pounds and three months in jail.

Thieves were daring in those days, despite the appallingly severe punishment if they were caught. Thus:

A very extraordinary robbery took place on Monday night, in the House of Lords. The whole of the gold lace, and all the ornaments of the Throne, the King's Arms excepted, were stripped off and carried away. . . .

In those days, too, a man might rise from the ranks of the propertyless. Thus:

On an Inquisition lately taken upon a female lunatic, the daughter of a dealer in old cloaths, it appeared that she was possessed of above

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£15,000, the accumulation of her father in his business. The old man began without capital .

The law in those days, as it is to-day, was sometimes a chancy business. And the English, then as now, were very punctilious about it. Two women that week in 1801 had reason to be grateful for this.

Mary Clark and Frances Phillips were indicted, the former for stealing a watch and some money, the property of Patrick Riley: and the latter for receiving the same knowing it to have been stolen.

Patrick Riley said he was a labourer in a warehouse. On the 13th of July he and a friend had been drinking somewhere in Old Street, St. Luke's, where they met the two prisoners standing under a gateway from the rain, they then took these girls to a public-house, where they sat drinking ale for four or five hours. The witness then left his friend and Phillips, and repaired to a house with the prisoner Clark. After they were together some time, she went off, and he, missing his purse and watch, went after her; but she got away from him. On the next day he saw his watch in the possession of a Constable.

The prisoners were both acquitted, from the following circumstance: the indictment was laid in London, because the house in which the prosecutor had his interview with the prisoner Clark, was within the City, in Golden Lane; but every other place where he had previously been in her company was in Middlesex. On Mr. Atley's cross-examining him, it appeared he had not seen his watch for some hours before the time he swore it was stolen, which, together with the circumstance of his being drunk, made it a question of doubt to the Jury whether the watch might not have been stolen in Middlesex; and if it was, the indictment must have fallen to the ground. The Jury availed themselves of this doubt, and found the prisoners Not Guilty. . . .

Of the paper's four columns of advertisements, two and a half are occupied with advertisements of new books, which is surprising, but education, patent medicines, and dancing come in for a share of attention.

Thus:

Mr. Robinson receives ten Young Gentlemen into his own House, for the purpose of public or private instruction. Besides what is usually taught in schools, his object is to initiate Youth in a rational and liberal System of Instruction prior to their introduction to larger Seminaries. . . .

The Temple Gardens are nearly contiguous to Arundel Street Seminary; and the Pupils enjoy the Great Benefit of pursuing their

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recreations therein, after the duties of the day, under the eye of their Tutor. . . .

It may, I think, be doubted whether the pupils *did* enjoy it, or whether the parents enjoyed "The terms, from Fifty to One Hundred Guineas a year."

"Rheumatism, Rheumatic Gout, Lumbago, Head-Aches, Numbness and Palsy" troubled our forefathers, and under this heading appeared the following advertisement to sufferers from these complaints.

The Testimony of Thousands, and daily experience, increases the reputation of WHITEHEAD'S ESSENCE OF MUSTARD. The Proprietor, Mr. R. Johnson, Apothecary, No. 15 Greek Street, Soho, was recently visited by a Lady, perfectly recovered, that had been a Rheumatic Cripple forty Years, but finally found the long wished-for relief in the Powers of this extraordinary medicine; nor are such cases of its efficacy very uncommon, for it has often been successful in cases that had baffled every other Method, and under circumstances that precluded every expectation of relief from the methods usually prescribed

It is prepared and sold in Pills, and also in a fluid state for external use at 2s. 9d. each box or bottle; and its efficacy is so generally known, that it may be had of every Medicine Vendor in England, Ireland, and America. . . .

There may be some significance in the fact that Scotland is not mentioned. Perhaps the Scots did not suffer from these complaints. Perhaps the 2s. 9d. a box or bottle acted as a deterrent to its general use in that canny land. I do but quote the advertisement as it appeared!

And then there follows the warning:

To prevent counterfeit imposition, every genuine Box and Bottle bears the signature "R. Johnson" (his own writing) on the label, which is necessary to be attended to.

How little times change!

Except, indeed, that those times seem to have been a little more leisurely than our own, as witness the following, on dancing.

Mr. Allen respectfully informs his Subscribers and Friends that his CITY ASSEMBLIES commence on Monday, October the 6th, at No. 10 Great Arliss Street, Goodman's Fields, and will be every following Monday. (None but Ladies of Character admitted.)

Ladies and Gentlemen who have learned in the Old Style, or not

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at all, are privately completed, in all the most admired steps, and every description of Dance in modern practice at the above Rooms.

Foreigners, Army and Navy Officers, Captains of Ships, Country Residents, and others, who can devote but a short time to this Accomplishment, may rest assured that such pains and attention will be exerted for their Improvement as will give them a Knowledge of the necessary parts of Dancing in about a fortnight, during which time they may Board and Lodge in the House.

Schools attended.

As one who, alas, has never been "privately completed in all the most admired steps," I envy the greater facilities of other days.

In advertising, sometimes the indirect approach is more effective than the direct and forthright approach. The reader is led on and on until at the right psychological moment, the goods, so to speak, are produced. There is a good example of this in the following advertisement addressed to "The British Merchants":

They being the stimulus and supporters of three-fourths of the whole existing Commerce at Present, and as the Happiness, Riches and Commerce of this Empire must depend on the quantity of food produced in this Island, to supply the superior animal economy, in taking from the number of the Human Species who consume only, and add them to the Cultivators, will be a liberal, charitable and humane action, as men approach from the first stage of society to the greatest height of Civilisation and Commerce, to stop at the medium would be the most permanent; but no such power does exist in the human mind is a received opinion among the few men who search for truth; and they must at this time lament to see eight-tenths of the inhabitants of this Island living on the produce of the other two. To assist in retracting from that state, WILLIAM GAIMES has much improved the LETTER COPYING MACHINE for the Counting House; a Boy can take the Copy in Twelve Minutes; the labour of six clerks for twelve hours; they being the first penmen in this Kingdom, is master of Copying all Languages; a Gentleman may read the Originals, but cannot the Copy well, produced by a Junior Clerk, and will totally prevent errors and revising, as many Houses keep the Original, and send the copy, being lighter, and completely the subject. They have many opponents and difficulties in being introduced to Merchants, from their supplying in one Counting House, the place of ten clerks; and will copy for twenty-four or more, which no other principle yet invented can copy for two; the measure is the simplest, accurate, and the only one fit for dispatch. The portable machine is so small and light, when complete, that a Gentleman may carry it in his great-coat pocket, or attached to a complete Writing Desk which contains

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Dressing and Shaving Instruments that are or may be wanted by Sea or by Land. .

It is a little involved perhaps. But note again how little times change. Here is the disproportion between the numbers of persons engaged on productive work and those not so engaged, which still troubles us to-day! Here is Invention doing its best to reduce the volume of unproductive work. And here are "opponents and difficulties" being put in the way by persons whose labour may become superfluous. Here are restrictive practices standing in the way of the "Happiness, Riches, and Commerce of this Empire."

It is too, too sad, and I cannot write any more just now!

CHAPTER 39



Fifty Years Ago

A SIMILAR chance to that which put into my hands recently a copy of Number One of the *Weekly Dispatch* of the year 1801, has now brought to me a copy of Number One of the *Daily Mail* dated May 4, 1896.

Certain contrasts, and certain similarities, between the first copies of these two papers, separated by nearly a hundred years, seem to me of interest.

The first copy of the *Daily Mail* consisted of eight pages, twice the number of those in the first issue of the *Weekly Dispatch*. And the size of the pages of the *Mail* is nearly twice as large as those of the *Dispatch*. Nevertheless, the *Mail* carries a caption: *The Busy Man's Daily Journal*. The explanation is that the *Mail*, large by comparison with the *Dispatch* of 1801, was small by comparison with its contemporaries. As a note in the "leader" column explains, this was due to the absence of the advertisement supplements, of two or four pages, carried by other papers. The *Mail* claimed to give the same news-service as its rivals, "but fewer advertisements."

The first number of the *Mail* also carries a caption—*A Penny Newspaper for One Halfpenny*—one-twelfth of the price of the *Dispatch* of 1801. For by now the "Tax of Knowledge" had gone, and new technical developments were about to revolutionize newspaper production. As the "leader" column explained:

It is no secret that remarkable new inventions have just come to the help of the Press. Our type is set by machinery, we can produce 200,000 copies per hour, cut, folded, and if necessary with the pages pasted together. Our stereotyping arrangements, engines, and machines are of the latest English and American construction, and it is the use of them on a scale unprecedented in any English newspaper office that enables the *Daily Mail* to effect a saving of 30 to 50 per cent, and be sold at half the price of its contemporaries.

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The *format* of this first number of the *Mail* is as sober, as respectable, and as undramatic as one of the current issues of *The Times*. And like *The Times* of to-day, it carried its advertisements on the front and back pages. There are no "streamer" headlines, no pictures, and no cartoons. But three columns of "The Daily Magazine" on page seven introduced a new feature into daily journalism, which was destined to evolve into the centre-page "Feature" columns of to-day.

What was afoot in the world on May 4, 1896?

In South Africa there was trouble with the Matabele, and the paper notes a "Slight brush with the enemy" at Bulawayo. Rhodes's column, whose advance was much impeded by "cattle disease and the tsetse fly," was attacked at Makalala Kop, and sustained fifty casualties. A dispatch from America notes that the American Press devotes much space to "the Transvaal question," and that the American papers "unite in praising the Boer Government, and in criticizing the attitude of the British Press in upholding the Jamieson Raid." Details are given of the way in which the Shah of Persia had been assassinated. In the Soudan, a "brilliant British Victory" over the Dervishes is reported. The loss to the British was one cavalryman and one intelligence scout killed, and ten men wounded. This was a very heated action in more senses than one, for it took place in a temperature of 116 in the shade. The Italians had invaded Abyssinia, and are reported to be advancing on Adigrat. A dispatch from New York reports dreadul atrocities by the Spanish on poor men, women, and children in Cuba, who were made to dig their own graves, and then riddled with Spanish bullets. Europe, from the pages of Number One of the *Mail*, appears hardly to have existed at all. . . .

At home, Mrs. Dyer, the notorious baby-killer, was standing her trial at Reading. Of her appearance, the reporter notes:

Mrs. Dyer is a type of woman that one might see in any of the poorer quarters of the London suburbs. She looked, indeed, the typical professional midwife, muddle-aged, motherly, rather heavy, but with a certain indefinable expression of experience. . . .

Murdering numbers of small children is rather apt, one supposes, to give one an "indefinable expression of experience!"

In the House of Commons there were only forty-four questions on the Order Paper for the day, which reflects the more leisurely political life of fifty years ago as compared with that of

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to-day. In these times there are usually well over a hundred questions down each day.

Sir Charles Dilke had had the unusual experience of "being immured in a room in the House of Commons, by reason of the handle of a door coming off." But his imprisonment must have been somewhat lightened for him by the presence, in his company, of what the paper describes as "a bevy of ladies."

The "Political Gossip" column notes that "the precincts of the House of late have been brightened up by an unusual number of pretty ladies, though what they can find amusing about the place out of the tea-on-the-terrace season it is difficult to imagine; possibly the attraction may be the large percentage of well-groomed and turned-out 'young bloods' which the last Election brought in." Possibly? Nay! Certainly!

It was "fast becoming the correct thing" for M.P.s "to come down to the House on cycles," and it was "not an uncommon sight to see as many as half a dozen, and even a dozen, machines just inside the Members' entrance in Palace Yard."

The Radicals were at odds with their leader, Lord Rosebery.

The great difficulty we have to face (said a Member) is that of how to oust Lord Rosebery. Unfortunately, there seems little disposition on his part to go; and I don't see the least sign of the Party as a whole giving him notice.

Alas, it is not only to-day that Party leaders linger unwanted on the stage! Like prima donnas, they sometimes go on farewell tours, but they never retire!

The young Lloyd George was annoying the Government, and the paper notes:

The Government have got even with Mr. Lloyd George and those other Members who are for ever accusing their political opponents of supporting Bills and giving votes from a corrupt motive, by putting down a notice of motion for a Select Committee "to enquire and report whether it is desirable to define more precisely the nature and extent of personal pecuniary interest, in any question before the House, which should disable a Member of the House from voting upon such question, and what procedure can most advantageously be adopted for enforcing such disability."

The outcome of this select committee was the adoption of a standing order requiring a Member to proclaim the fact if he had a pecuniary interest in any matter before the House. In 1896

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there were some sixteen years to go before the Marconi scandal broke. Then it was at Mr. Lloyd George's own head that the charge was laid that, having a substantial pecuniary interest in the Marconi company, he had refrained from disclosing this at a time when he was putting through the House the terms upon which the Government was to acquire the Marconi business.

What was known as "the Labour Question" was a good deal in evidence in May of 1896. In London, the National Municipal Labour Union—evidently the forerunner of the General and Municipal Workers' Union of to-day—staged a Hyde Park demonstration to demand for municipal employees a minimum wage of thirty shillings a week for a working week of forty-eight hours. To-day, fifty years later, we have just about caught up with this demand! The average pay is now about five pounds a week, which will buy almost as much as thirty shillings in 1896!

A number of M.P.s introduced a Bill into the House, fixing a "limit of 66 hours to the employment of women as Barmaids in licensed houses." The paper notes: "These unhappy creatures are kept at work from seven in the morning till one or two the next morning." That problem, too, has been solved by time and ordered progress! There are not enough supplies in the pubs to keep them going for more than a short time per day!

And here, in the column entitled "Chat on 'Change," is a warning which, if it had been heeded then, it might be better for us in these days:

The possible accidents to look out for are politics and labour troubles. In regard to the latter there is already an ominous whisper of weariness of things as they are among the colliers.

The Annual Dinner of "the Booksellers" is given notice. Among the guests were Mr. Augustine Birrell, and Mr. Andrew Lang. Despite the old adage that "Barabbas was a publisher," the report notes that the Booksellers had distributed, the previous year, some £1,643 in charity. On second thoughts, this does not disprove the adage! For how could the booksellers have distributed this amount unless they had first made it out of the labours of poor scribblers like me? At this dinner, Mr. T. Fisher Unwin was present—obviously of the same family as the Unwin of Allen and Unwin, the firm which, under the austere compulsions of Cripps, conditions the editions of my books to a derisory size!

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In the Courts, a lady was charged with libelling a solicitor. The accused, when arrested, said that she "could tell a very dark story about this solicitor!" But then, who could not tell dark stories about solicitors? She was "bound over." A curate was cited as co-respondent in a divorce case, having committed adultery with a miller's wife. And a poor, underpaid devil of a postman was charged with stealing a postal order.

"Consols" were described as weak; but the two-and-three-quarter per cents stood at 111½.

A sidelight on the nation's treatment of its veterans is provided by a note that of the 4,500 persons who had passed through the vagrant wards of the Nottingham Poor Law Union in the three months ended March 31, 1896, 535 were discharged soldiers, and of this number 436 had served for seven years or more.

"Dr. Tibbles Vi-Cocoa" (O, memories of my childhood!) had a two-column, full-page length, advertisement on the back page. And "Bovril" did nearly as well. Newly published books had a column to themselves. The "Situations Vacant," "Situations Wanted," "Articles for Sale," "Apartments to Let," and "Houses for Sale" sections of the modern newspaper are all represented in Number One of the *Mail*.

But, Oh! how different prices were!

Not everybody wants false teeth, which were advertised by the Anglo-American Dental Company at "One Guinea for a Complete Set." But everybody wants a house to live in.

A house at Finchley—"semi-detached, three reception-rooms, five bedrooms, bathroom (h. and c.), two kitchens and capital offices"—was advertised at £450. An eight-roomed residence, with bathroom, at Ballard's Lane, Finchley, was offered at £275. Two houses at Norwood junction, with long gardens, were on offer at £325 the pair.

To-day, the pre-fabricated "chicken-runs" which we are erecting, and which will constitute the slums of to-morrow, are costing £1,500 each to make and erect! Lord, if only we had sense enough to see that the most important function of Government is to keep the value of money stable! And if only Trade Union leaders and their followers would understand that in the chase of wages after prices the hare of prices is never caught by the dog of wages!

The Hotel Cecil was advertising its forthcoming opening. In

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the most modern and luxurious hotel in London, the table d'hôte lunch was to be 4s., and the dinner 6s.!

The National Sunday League was advertising 6s. return trips to the Isle of Wight, and return trips to Ostend for 8s. 6d. And the worthy "Thos. Cook and Sons" were advertising a week in Switzerland for Five Guineas, and a Thirteen-Day Tour of Holland, the Rhine and Switzerland for £14 10s. The golden sovereign was still abroad in the land, and you could buy something with it!

The newspapers "Circulation Bureau" had still to come into existence, but *Reynolds Newspaper* was advertising that between 1892 and 1896 its circulation had gone up by 75,000. But about the not irrelevant question, "From what, to what?" it was coy to the point of silence!

But I must close with a specially interesting—and, I suspect, new—feature in advertising—the Personal column. These I must quote in full . . .

The first is addressed to "Bessie darling," and it runs:

Mother wishes you many happy returns of the day. You said that to avoid all reproachful letters, you would keep your whereabouts unknown for a time. Is the time not yet ended? There shall be no reproachful letters; but for Heaven's sake let me hear from or of you. There is no need, dear, of all this secrecy, unless a stronger will than your own is at work to keep you silent. Even if this is so, do not keep me longer without a word. It is so hard, my darling.

Moving, is it not? The distraught mother! The departed and silent daughter! The yawning chasm between! The dark suggestion of a villain somewhere in the background forbidding the maiden to write!

But there is tragedy, too, in the next one, addressed to "Oak"—whom I suspect to have been a sailor:

Oh, why have you left me for so long? This suspense is killing me. When you took me to the Circus you swore you would never leave me. Think how you are keeping that promise! If you do not come back to me soon I fear I shall be tempted into accepting one of the offers of marriage I am receiving almost daily.

Here, too, is the stuff of Drama. The Promise! The Forgotten Vow! The Lonely Lady languishing in solitude! She hangs on to hope by a hair. But the strain is telling! She doesn't want to marry anyone else. That visit to the Circus "got her, good and

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proper." But what can a poor deserted girl do? And even if you think, as I am inclined to think myself, that the girl is overdoing it a bit when she talks of offers of marriage "almost daily," you can conceive that she *may* be tempted by another suitor! Will "Oak" come back in time? Or will it be "TOO LATE?" We do not know!

The name of the advertiser is "Ivy." She exhibits all the clinging qualities of the plant of that name. But ivy has been prised from the oak before now. And a dark suspicion crosses my mind that she may have clung so tightly to "Oak" as to make him feel as if he were strangling.

"Uncle Jim"—to whom the next advertisement is addressed—has evidently been "up to a bit of no good." The advertisement, signed by "Nicce," is terse and to the point:

Come home at once. All is forgiven. Bring the pawn-tickets with you.

What, I wonder, had *he* been up to? It seems plain that he had gone off. It seems plain, too, that he had taken some of the household goods with him. And I suspect that this was not the first time. For how could "Nicce" have known that the "stuff" had, in all probability, been pawned, except on the basis of some earlier experience of the same kind? "Uncle," I should judge, was a bad hat. And "Nicce" would have been well-advised not to throw good money after bad by advertising for him.

I come to the last of the series. Here we encounter the note, not of tragedy, but of philosophic humour:

Will the gentleman who took away by mistake the Brown Pony standing outside the Star and Garter, on City and Suburban day, kindly send to the same place for the trap, or return Pony? One is no use without the other.

This pleases me—definitely! It combines sense, philosophy and humour. Sense—for the chances of finding that pony through the agency of the Police are small. Horse-copers are adepts at changing the appearance of a horse! Philosophy—for the essence of philosophy is to see things in their proper proportion; and never to let the sense of temporal misfortune submerge in sorrow the higher man! Humour—for the offer to surrender the trap to go with the pony has that modest, self-deprecatory humour which is found at its best among the Chinese. If there was a way to the heart of the thief—who, you will note, is excused from any

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suggestion of stealing (which might offend him) by the insertion of those two words, "by mistake"—*this* surely is the way. . . .

But when I read these poignant advertisements a second time, I share the feeling of King Arthur in Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*. And "all my mind is clouded by a doubt."

They are too apposite, too universal in their appeal, too striking in their co-incidence, too apt for No. 1 of a new Journal. I suspect that "Oak" and "Ivy," "Uncle Jim" and "Niece," "Bessie" and her poor mother are not real persons. I suspect that they have been "thought up" by some ingenious sub-editor, to give a start to a new feature in Journalism. In short, I suspect that the era of the *Daily Mail* has arrived!

CHAPTER 40



Mr. Litchfield's Whisky

IF on first joining a ship, you immediately see signs of inadequacy, you may be sure that these signs will multiply as the days go by. For a man who is faithful in a few things will be faithful in many and vice-versa. On this ship it is vice-versa. Yesterday we received the news that there is no more whisky in the mess. There's no shortage of whisky in Jamaica, any more than there is a shortage of fruit or cigarettes. A normally efficient purser would have cocked an eye at his stocks while in Jamaica, and made up his deficiencies in whatever he needed. Maybe ours did. Maybe he didn't. Maybe there was a "rule" which prevented him from doing the obviously necessary thing. I don't know. I only know that there is no more whisky to be had in the saloon.

This circumstance precipitates an issue of some importance and complexity. For while there is no whisky in the saloon, there is whisky aboard. Mr. Litchfield, for example, has twelve bottles of it. He is taking it to England, where he rightly understands there is a shortage of whisky. But it is doubtful how much of this whisky he will be allowed to take into England. For there are rules there, too. The principal one seems to be "when in doubt, say no." Especially if the issue is whether the English shall be allowed to have any relaxation or pleasure.

Thus on a recent trip on another ship to South America our Captain and the other officers on the ship were presented with a dozen cases of oranges. Now England is very short of oranges, and you might have thought that, this being so, the arrival of these twelve cases of oranges would have been welcomed. The officers were mostly married and with children. There's a lot of oranges in a case of oranges. These cases would have gone to half a dozen different towns in Britain. There the officers, their wives and kids would have been able to enjoy them. And, doubtless, there would have been an overspill which would have bene-

fired the neighbours and their children. Quite a lot of folk might have had oranges. But No! When the ship reached London the Customs people informed the officers that fruit—and oranges are fruit!—could not be landed without an import licence. And for these twelve cases there was no import licence. Therefore, plainly, the cases could not be landed. This was a blow to the officers, their wives and children, and all the possible recipients of the “overspill.” The officers went into a huddle. They suggested that in the circumstances the oranges might go to the local hospital, where some folk at any rate would get the benefit of them. But again No! In order to get the oranges to the local hospital they would plainly have to be landed. They would have to be—so to speak—imported. And without an import licence they could not be imported. That was utterly clear under the rules. Then what was to become of the oranges? Ah! the rules said nothing about that. And as the oranges could not be landed, they were not the concern of H.M. Customs and Excise anyway. This was not a matter for them! The officers left the ship: the oranges remained. They still remain, and are now on the way back to South America. Unless someone steals them, there they will stay until they go bad. But “law” has been stoutly upheld, and the principle of the socialization of misery maintained. The officers’ wives and kids are as orangeless as the rest of Britain. ...

Now if that was the attitude in regard to oranges what chance is there of Mr. Litchfield being allowed to land twelve bottles of whisky? *Pari passu*, it would seem, very little. What are the rules? Opinion is divided. One bottle, it seems to be clear, may be taken in, probably without paying duty on it. There is an impression that, if duty is paid, as much as three bottles may be allowed to enter a whisky-less Britain. But the other nine bottles will certainly not be allowed. Not even on an import licence. For, in respect of whisky there are no import licences—Britain, or rather Scotland, being the great producer and exporter of whisky. I’m quite sure that in respect of whisky the situation is even more difficult than in relation to oranges! In respect of oranges the theoretical possibility, if not the practical opportunity, of an import licence did exist. In respect of whisky there is neither possibility nor opportunity.

So there we are! No whisky in the saloon, but twelve perfectly good bottles in Mr. Litchfield’s cabin, of which not more than three, at the best, can hope to be landed in Britain. The solution

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seems to all of us, except Mr. Litchfield, to be utterly clear. Mr. Litchfield, I regret to say, exhibits a dilatoriness, not to say a cageyness on the matter, which amounts almost to a complete dereliction of his social responsibility. Not to put too fine a point on it the man appears to be positively obtuse!

We are, I need hardly say, working on this situation. Time is short, for it is now Tuesday and we leave the ship next Monday morning. But so far our approach has been a subtle, indirect and allusive approach. Thus at breakfast this morning we were discussing the differences in character between various public men, such as Churchill, Morrison, Attlee and so on. Their different dispositions were fully analysed, but no one felt that the last word had been said until I remarked that the difference between them could be stated thus. If Churchill had twelve bottles of whisky to take in he would try to bluff his way through the Customs with cheery *bonhomie*, and would almost certainly succeed. Mr. Morrison would perform an extremely careful calculation as to how many bottles he could get away with in the official despatch case. While Mr. Attlee would at once recognize that nine bottles were definitely surplus, and make them available to his colleagues without further ado. I implied that in character and disposition Mr. Litchfield resembled Mr. Attlee. But a sullen silence was the only response.

Tentative enquires have also been made of Mr. Litchfield as to his feelings. Does he really feel happy at the prospect of those surplus nine bottles being consumed by the Customs Officers who will confiscate them, and who, while drinking them, will almost certainly indulge in many a hearty guffaw at the expense of simpletons like Mr. Litchfield who keep them supplied, *gratis*, with the finest products of Messrs. Johnny Walker Ltd.? No—he doesn't like that idea.

Very well then!—does he relish the idea of those nine bottles staying on the ship, and being consumed by the ship's officers in a series of parties to the young and beautiful women who, doubtless, will be passengers on the return trip? And who, it may be added, will spice their guffaws with remarks such as—“*We told him, but he wouldn't listen.*” No—he doesn't like that either.

Very well again! “Does he think that when these nine bottles are declared unlandable at the docks, we his friends, from whom he will then have withheld whisky for a week, will immediately rally round him and make ourselves drunk by drinking these

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nine bottles on the spot, in order to prevent either of these things happening? Would it be just, would it be fair, would it be right or appropriate, to entertain such an expectation after the treatment accorded to us? That, I think, has shaken him a little!

There is a Jamaican Air Force chap aboard. He has his thirtieth birthday to-day. And what does he do? He tells us all—white and coloured—that to-night he will make available to us two bottles of port, wherein if we are so disposed—and we are so disposed!—we may drink his health. Confronted with such an example what does Mr. Litchfield propose to do? Nothing? Is this the way for a member of an imperial race to comport himself? Must he be shamed into doing the right thing by the example of a man who never went to Oxford, and who has only the pay of an A.C.1 to live on? How long will it be before the English learn that, with power, there go responsibilities? How long before the injunction “noblesse oblige” penetrates their dull consciousness? It is a grave matter, and a thing to ponder upon!

We hope, of course, not to have to proceed to extremes in this matter! We hope that a dawning, if somewhat deferred, sense of the fitness of things, a conception of what is due to Harrow and Oxford, of what becomes an Englishman and a gentleman, will make extreme measures unnecessary. It is not even as if Mr. Litchfield were consuming this whisky himself. If this were so, we should at least be relieved of the sense of appalling waste which the thought of all this unused whisky inspires in us. We hope Mr. Litchfield will reflect upon such reserved and distant allusions as have been made to the matter, and that these reflections will mature—“mature” is I think the right word—in swift, firm, and may I add, generous decision.

But if not, let it not be supposed that the matter will rest where it is. Nor the whisky either. Mr. Litchfield has two cabin mates. One of them does not drink whisky, and is, moreover, respectable. But of the other I have considerable hopes. The Trojan horse may have to be invoked. That would be in complete accord with party political tactics.

And if even these should fail let it not be forgotten that there is an Independent aboard! The Independent is—has to be, indeed, as a condition of survival in these caucus-ridden days!—individualistic, resourceful and determined. And when Parties fail to protect the common interest, he does not hesitate to step in. Having hi-jacked Rugby, shall I quail before a little matter of nine

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bottles of whisky? Some conception of this possibility appears to have dawned on Mr. Litchfield, who sits in a position in the saloon from which he can watch his cabin door.

But the man must eat. And he must sometimes sleep. I do not doubt that all may yet be well!

After such a bout of rolling and tossing as I do not want again to experience in a hurry, the weather has greatly improved and we have had three days of comparative calm, and even a good deal of sunshine. We are now only two days from home. To-day is Saturday. To-morrow night (Sunday) we should be in the Channel. By nine a.m. on Monday we should be at Gravesend. And by noon we should be in the West India dock, the long run of 4,500 miles safely done at last.

The whole voyage has been in marked contrast with the journey out. On the way out we were passengers. On the journey home we have been part of the cargo—a much less important part than the load of bananas we are carrying. The price of the passage out was £45. The price of the passage back is £60. A gap of 33 per cent requires a little explanation. But worse than the contrast in fares has been the contrast in the treatment of the passengers. The food has been much poorer, and the cooking much worse. The attention given to the needs of the passengers has been practically nil. We have had to force morning coffee: force the abolition of the silly five-shilling deposit on books from the ship's wholly contemptible "library": force the provision of some ink wherewith to fill our fountain pens: force the provision of an occasional news bulletin to keep us in touch with the world.

At not a single point have I seen any spontaneous intelligent care for the passengers' needs. The prohibition on buying anything in Jamaica has given us an almost fruitless (in the strict sense of the word) journey. We have had to smoke cigarettes of brands which we didn't want, and forgo drinks of the kind we did. It has been nobody's business to tell us, without enquiry, the arrangements for disembarkation, and we are not quite sure of them even now. It has been nobody's business to regulate the opening and closing of port holes in the saloon or to regulate the temperature therein. It has been nobody's business to collect and stack up deck chairs at nights—mostly broken and all very dirty—after use during the day, so that they have been blown about, and exposed to spray and rain, nightly. Of the Purser, who is usually

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responsible for the comfort of passengers, I have seen nothing either in the saloon, the dining-room or the decks or anywhere else since the first day I came aboard. The cabin stewards have been good, and the saloon steward has done his best within his limited authority. In the dining-saloon, the English, including all the ship's officers, have sat at one long table. All the Jamaicans, including one R.A.F. commissioned officer and one A.C.I., have been seated at another table, with no ship's officer at all—a sharper and more humiliating example of colour discrimination it would be hard to find.

Now, in so far as all this has meant a lot of quite unnecessary discomfort to some sixteen people who are paying 33 per cent more in fares than they would be on the other Line, the matter is not one of cosmic importance. We shall doubtless survive to grin reminiscently over this journey. But I see in this example a picture of England in miniature. And that picture troubles me.

There is at the moment so great a shortage of goods and services in the world that the world will buy them—however indifferent and whatever the price. But that situation will not long endure. In two, three or four years—anyone's guess is as good as mine—the world will be demanding more for its money and it will be comparing one set of services and costs with another. In the United States, there has already been something like a consumers' strike, which has surprised and discomfited the prophets. In England I see signs of the same thing developing. People are feeling that costs are so high that they will buy nothing which necessity does not compel them to buy. In a dozen American industries—cars, wireless sets, refrigerators and what not—the pressure of pent-up purchasing power which it was anticipated would create "boom conditions" in that country is failing to express itself on anything like the expected scale. And the same thing may, and probably will, prove to be true in England.

That fact constitutes for the U.S.A., and for Britain, an issue of some importance. If to it we in England add inferior service at inflated prices in areas subjected, like sea travel, to foreign competition, we are going to run into bad trouble before long.

Delays in delivery, a vast series of hurdles to overcome such as export permits, licences and what not, have deprived Britain of many orders she might otherwise have had. If, when these difficulties are overcome, the goods and services prove inferior and the price 33 per cent higher than the Americans will supply

Mr. Litchfield's Whisky

at, a lot of us in Britain will be put out of business, just as soon as the Seller's Market of to-day gives place to the Buyer's Market of to-morrow.

This ship is suffering from a projection, into the conditions of peace, of the mentality of war-time. In war-time, people have to put up with what they can get. And price is not the determining thing. The war has been over a long time now, but on this ship it is like going back to war conditions. Since a lot of people have got to travel anyway, and since berths are still short, this ship may run a good complement of passengers for a little while yet. Under conditions of free competition, and an abundance of berths, it would not be carrying a single passenger. I went out on a ship, owned by a company almost wholly American—not for choice but because it was the only one going when I wanted to go. I return on a British ship. When next I go to Jamaica I shall choose, if I can, not to go on this ship, but on a ship of the other Line. That would be the choice too, as soon as choice is free again, of every passenger on this ship. We owe something to patriotism, but nothing to stupidity, unimaginativeness and slackness—all of which have protruded themselves, to our great discomfort, at every stage of this voyage.

A copy of this chapter will go to the Shipping Company concerned with a recommendation that they either cease to cater for passengers or take some thought for their comfort. They may conclude that in their total economy passengers are not important, and that they must continue to suffer and endure. If so I warn them that this ship will ere long be without passengers. But Britain cannot disregard "the passengers," so to speak. It cannot disregard the export market. The British economy is the least autarchic in the world. But if price and service be inferior to what can be got elsewhere, there is nothing to prevent the world deserting us. If it does, it is not merely capitalists and industrialists who will suffer. It is all classes in Britain, and not least the working masses.

We had better pull up our socks!